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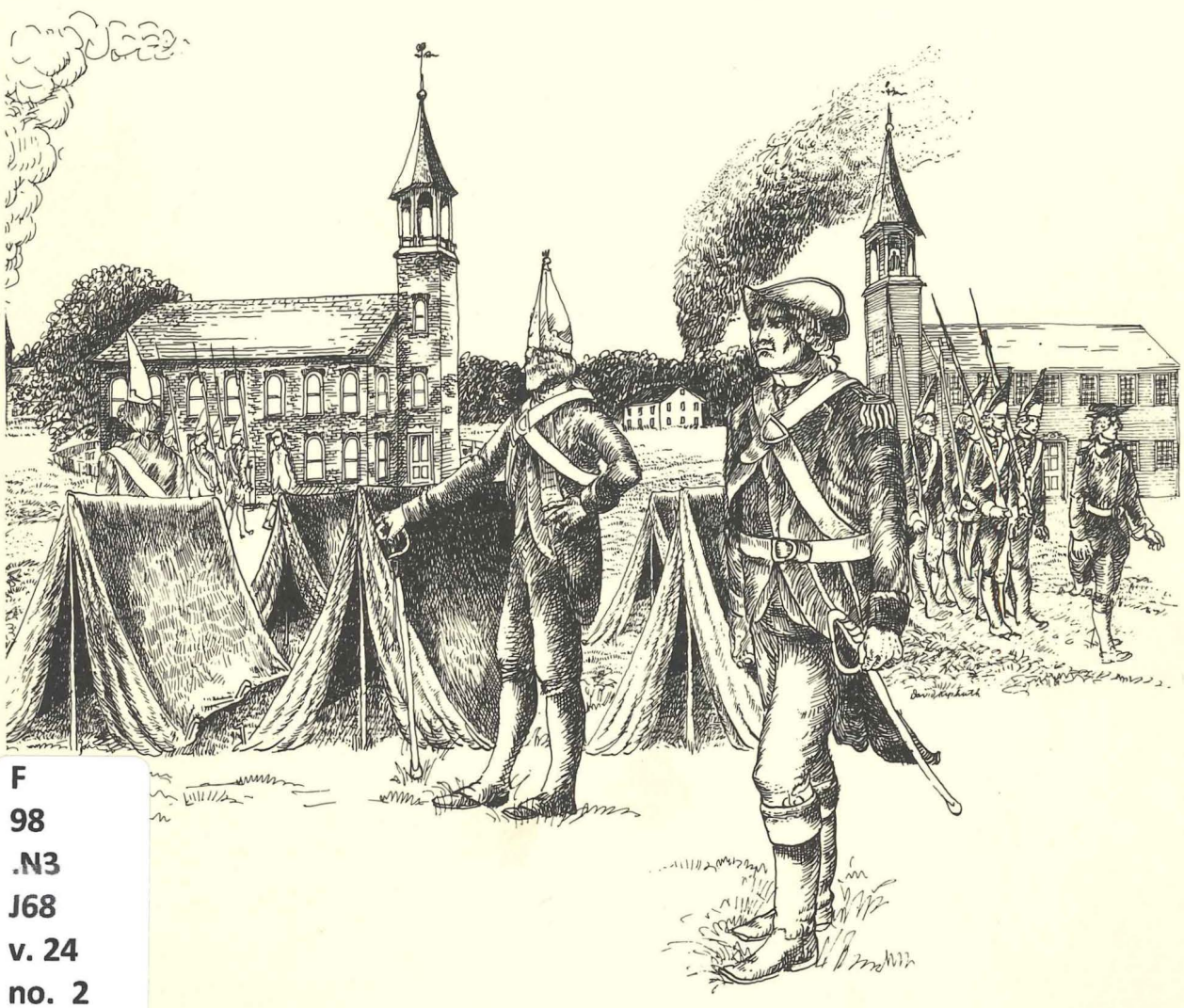

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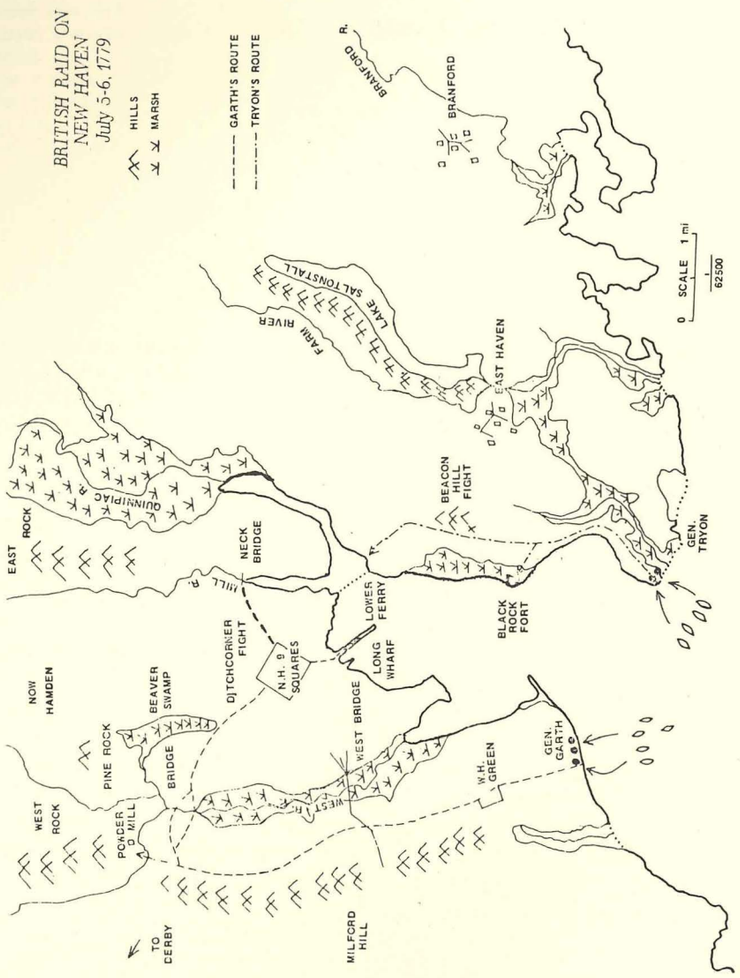
THE NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY was founded in 1862 by a representative group of New Haven citizens. As stated in the Constitution adopted by the Society, revised in 1965:

"The object of the Society shall be the collection, preservation and publication of historical and genealogical matter relating to the early settlement and subsequent history, especially of New Haven and its vicinity, and incidentally of other portions of the United States."

The museum and library of the Society are open free of charge to the public. In addition to the Whitney Avenue building the Society owns the Pardee-Morris House at 325 Lighthouse Road, Morris Cove, New Haven. Built originally in 1685, it was burned during the British invasion in 1779. Rebuilt at once, it incorporates surviving portions of the older structure. The Pardee-Morris House is now restored and furnished appropriately and is open free of charge to the public during the summer months.



"British Raid on New Haven, July 5-6, 1779." Map drawn by Joseph Hoyt

"THE DAY THE ENEMY WAS IN TOWN"

The British Raids on Connecticut, July, 1779

Thomas J. Farnham

The Alarm

All day long the humidity had hung over Long Island Sound, intensifying the sun's rays and carrying the summer heat into the shadiest gardens and the darkest rooms. There was no way to be comfortable, so the people of Connecticut's coast tried to ignore the heat and went about their affairs. It was the Lord's day—Sunday, July 4, 1779—and for most the day's affairs consisted of attending religious services. In New Haven, at the Yale Chapel, Professor Naphtali Daggett preached for most of the day, using I Romans, 16 as his text. The students, perspiring and heavy-lidded in the chapel's warmth, fought to keep their minds on the learned professor's message. Only eleven had the fortitude to join Professor Daggett and President Ezra Stiles at the Lord's day supper that followed the service.[1]

Most of the students, however, like New Haveners generally, did attend a community meeting held at the "middle brick meeting-house" on the Green. Because the Sabbath officially ended at sundown, the meeting began then. Its purpose was to prepare for the third anniversary of the birth of the United States, the celebration to take place Monday, July 5. The meeting opened with a few moments of mourning for General David Wooster, a New Haven merchant-soldier killed during the British raid on Danbury, Connecticut, two years earlier. Then another merchant-soldier from New Haven was honored, this one still alive and still esteemed by his neighbors: General Benedict Arnold, hero of the battles of Saratoga.

1. Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary* (New York, 1901), II, 351; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles* (New Haven, 1962), p. 331.

The townspeople agreed on the details of their celebration. A grand procession, headed by the Second Company of Governor's Guards—Captain James Hillhouse commanding—would march to the Green. The local militia under Lieutenant Colonel Hezekiah Sabin would also stand for review. At the Green, a banquet would follow where an abundance of toasts would offer a chance for many to announce their loyalty to the new republic and would offer even more of the town's people an opportunity to feel the warmth of patriotism that only good West Indian rum could encourage. All the neighboring towns would participate. Well satisfied that the celebration would run smoothly the next day, the people began to leave the meeting and make their ways home.[2]

Most were between the meetinghouse and their homes when the alarm sounded: three blasts from a cannon. It meant a British fleet was nearby and seemed headed toward town.

Few New Haveners were concerned. They believed this fleet, like the one they had sighted a week or so before, was destined for New London or Newport, Rhode Island. The British held both New York and Newport, so the passage of British ships in the Sound was, in the minds of many at least, hardly a matter to detract from the delights planned for the morning.

President Stiles reacted differently. He feared that this time New Haven might be the enemy's target, and he pleaded with Colonel Sabin to summon the militia. Although barely five feet, four inches tall, Stiles was a dignified and persuasive man. His ever-present wig and academic robes made him seem older than his fifty-one years, but such accouterments were unnecessary to enhance his reputation as a man of wisdom and a careful scholar, hardly a man inclined to hysteria. The militia should muster, if only as a precaution, he argued. Sabin, despite his respect for Stiles, rejected his suggestion and ordered instead only that the guard extend its rounds to keep a close watch on the fleet as it approached and, he hoped, passed New Haven. Convinced of the possibility of attack and harassed by the unremitting heat, Stiles knew he would be unable to sleep.[3]

Three miles from the center of town, in that section of New Haven called West Haven, a company of guards also spent a night without sleep. Among them was Thomas Painter, a nineteen-year-old shoemaker who had enlisted in the guards only four months before. The light of a partial moon and the stars was enough to outline the British fleet as it approached. The fleet moved slowly; the wind had all but died. About one o'clock on the morning of the fifth, Painter

2. George Hare Ford, "The Defense of New Haven, July, 1779," in *Revolutionary Characters of New Haven* (New Haven, 1911), pp. 32-33.

3. Ezra Stiles's notes for his diary, quoted in Charles H. Townshend, *The British Invasion of New Haven* (New Haven, 1879), p. 41; Morgan, *Gentle Puritan*, p. 368.

saw the fleet begin to anchor near the mouth of New Haven Harbor. The alarm guns sounded for the second time that night, and Painter set off on a run for the home of his uncle, Jesse Stevens, to warn him of the danger.[4]

At the New Haven Green, Colonel Sabin ordered the alarm bells rung, summoning the militia to their stations. Stiles called the undergraduate students together, announced he was closing the college, and began packing the school's and his own records for transfer out of town. Lights appeared in homes throughout the town, and drowsy militiamen slowly began to assemble. All was noise and confusion: children awake and crying, horses reluctant to forsake the pasture for saddle or traces, and men and women wondering what the British presence meant.

As soon as the militiamen began assembling at the Green, rumors again began to spread that the alarm was false, that the British would, come dawn, be on their way, and that their target must be farther up the coast. Stiles urged Sabin to prepare, to have the militia ready just on the chance the British meant to raid. But again his warnings went unheeded.[5]

New Haveners simply refused to believe their town could be the object of attack. The militia began to drift back home, irritated by the loss of sleep and the sticky weather which had persisted so late into the night. When young Tom Painter reached his uncle's home and told the old man of the British fleet lying but a few hundred yards away, his uncle refused to believe there was any real danger, although he did give his nephew what ammunition he had just on the outside chance the enemy meant to strike.

As Painter returned to his post near Old Field Creek, he saw lights in homes where some New Haven families were removing furniture and other valuables they planned to take into the interior. But most of New Haven, accustomed to false alarms and reluctant to believe that the town had any real military importance, returned to bed, like Painter's Uncle Jesse, to try to find some rest despite the weather.[6]

New Haveners were correct in doubting the strategic importance of their town. To be sure, New Haven was the sixth largest city in the new nation, with a population of more than 8,000. It was also one of the state capitals. It could even claim three distilleries—where West Indian molasses became New England rum, a brewery, a powder mill, a newspaper, a bookstore, and, of course, a

4. Henry Howe, ed., "Personal Reminiscences of the Late Revolutionary War by the Late Thomas Painter of West Haven," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*, IV, 245.

5. Stiles, *The Literary Diary*, II, 352; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven newspaper), June 30, 1779.

6. Howe, ed., "Reminiscences of Painter," p. 245.

college. Before the war thirty or forty vessels had left the harbor each year to deliver horses and oxen to St. Christopher's and other West Indian islands.

But even so, New Haven had little that would justify King George's sending an army against it. Its zeal for the Revolution was certainly no greater than that of most Connecticut towns and probably less than many. Its harbor was inferior to New London's. In fact, at low water, large ships were unable to dock at Long Wharf, which then extended only 1,900 feet into the harbor; instead they had to leave their cargoes at the pier, an eighty-foot square of rock and wood built in the channel, and arrange for them to be transported by smaller craft to the wharf. The economic life of the town still had much more a country than a maritime flavor. The *Connecticut Journal,* the local paper, contained many more notices of lost, strayed, or stolen livestock than of merchandise from exotic ports.[7]

Barter remained the medium of exchange. Solomon Simson offered deer and sheepskin breeches for "country produce"; Michael Todd had rum, sugar, and rock salt that he hoped to trade for flour; and Martin Gatter would pay "one dollar per pound for good clean'd hogs bristles, half a dollar for uncleaned ditto . . . in money or earthen ware." New Haven was still a small, rural town, large only by contrast with its even more rural neighbors.[8]

But what it lacked in those things that would make it important to the enemy, it more than made up in beauty. Shortly after the Revolution, Robert Hunter, Jr., a London merchant, climbed to the top of Yale's chapel, "from the summit of which you have a commanding view of the whole city: the harbor, the shipping, the sound, Long Island, Newhaven River [the Quinnipiac], the West River, and the beautiful cultivated country round—the elegant mountains forming a striking and pleasing contrast with the delightful valleys." Altogether, he concluded, "it looks like a paradise . . . "; it was as beautiful as any town he had ever seen.[9]

Eighteenth-century New Haven was much larger than it is now. It included what are today the separate towns of West Haven, Hamden, North Haven, East Haven, and parts of Bethany and Woodbridge. It covered an area twelve miles deep by eleven miles wide and included seven or eight small communities, each part of the town but each physically separate from the others.

7. Morgan, *Gentle Puritan,* p. 311; Rollin G. Osterweis, *Three Centuries of New Haven* (New Haven, 1953), p. 169; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *American Loyalist: Jared Ingersoll* (New Haven, 1971), pp. 371-72; Patrick Ferguson to Sir Henry Clinton, May 27, 1779, in Lloyd A. Brown, *Loyalist Operations in New Haven* (Meriden, 1938).

8. *Connecticut Journal,* January 6 and 20, May 26, June 23, 1779.

9. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, *Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786: Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr.* (San Marino, 1943), p. 156.

The center of the town's life was the public square, or Green, as it was called. In the center of the Green was the "new brick meeting-house" where plans for the Independence Day celebration had been made. Built in 1757, the meeting-house ran parallel to a dirt road soon to be named Temple Street and was surrounded on its other three sides by the ancient town burying ground. Between this building and what would become Chapel Street was the elegant Georgian State House constructed in 1763, and on the opposite side of the brick meetinghouse stood the white frame meetinghouse of the Fairhaven Society. On the western side of the Green, toward the college, was the old 1718 State House, badly in need of repair but still occupied at this time by the Hopkins Grammar School. An old jail, beyond reclamation by even the most skilled carpenter, stood next to it.

Across the street were the three buildings of Yale College: the original building of 1718 called Yale College, shortly to be demolished; the Athenaeum, or Chapel, from whose spire Robert Hunter had marvelled at the beauty around him; and South Middle College, also called Connecticut Hall. On what the twentieth century knows as Church Street stood the Episcopal Church, just south of Chapel Street, near what was then called Cutler's Corner, and the blue meetinghouse, built by the White Haven Society on the corner of Elm.

Isaac Beers operated a tavern at College and Chapel Streets, and it, along with the four churches and the State House, played vital roles in the social and political life of the town.

Few New Haveners, when they learned the British fleet was anchored nearby, could imagine what in their town could attract so large a force. It must be headed elsewhere.

This refusal to fear attack had persisted since the start of the war and meant that little real thought had gone into New Haven's defense. When fighting began in Massachusetts in April, 1775, Benedict Arnold, then a druggist in New Haven, took the town's Second Company of Guards to Cambridge to join the Massachusetts troops against the British. The company shortly returned without Arnold, who was off to Ticonderoga, and for a while this small contingent of part-time soldiers provided the town's first line of defense. The haphazardly organized militia, which mustered only twice a year and whose function was answering alarms, was all the Second Company had to rely upon for aid. Hezekiah Sabin, who commanded the Second Company during Arnold's absence, operated a crockery store near the Green, and between his business and his occasional service with the Continental Army paid little attention to New Haven's safety.

Not until after the Connecticut Council of Safety had ordered that fifty state troops be raised to defend the town and to build a small fort on the Harbor, and not until the Council had also sent six hundredweights of powder to the town, did local leaders get down to the business of providing protection against enemy

raids. On November 6, 1775, the town meeting ordered that a beacon be erected on Indian Hill in East Haven, voted to establish a volunteer company of artillery and three volunteer companies of householders, agreed "to make application to the neighboring towns to come in upon the alarm," and appointed a committee to oversee the state troops in the construction of the fort.[10]

Captain Joseph Thompson commanded the fifty men who worked on the fort. It was to be constructed at Black Rock on the east side of the Harbor. Thompson and his men worked until December 23, when they temporarily abandoned the project because of cold weather. The Council ordered an extra three pounds paid to him for the discomfort he already had had to endure. The following March, Thompson and his men set to work finishing the project.[11]

By June the fort itself was completed. The Council then ordered that cannon be placed in the fort and authorized Thompson to spend up to twenty-five pounds "to build a cheap barrack near Black Rock." In October, as cold weather approached, the General Assembly added a bit of luxury to the barracks when it resolved that the roof be shingled and a chimney added.

From the beginning the fort's design reflected the stinginess of the Council. In addition to the cost of the barracks and the wages of the soldiers, the Council had allowed "for many sundries of timber, plank, rum, etc., etc., for and about building the fort, etc., to the amount of £74-10-8." If contemporary descriptions of the fort are accurate, a large share of the £74 must have gone for rum. The fort was constructed of sods, the tops of which were about sixteen feet above the Harbor's water. The sod design was effective in absorbing the shock of a cannon ball, but the fort was entirely at the mercy of whoever controlled the high land behind it. No British spy ever regarded it as a real obstacle to invasion, and Samuel Motte of the Connecticut Council of Safety reported to the governor that a determined enemy could "easily take possession of it, & of course command the entrance of the harbor." But at the end of 1776 it was upon this work that New Haven depended to protect it from the might of Britannia.[12]

During that same year, the Council authorized Adam Babcock, Jeremiah Atwater, Isaac Doolittle, and David Austin to operate a powder mill at New Haven.

10. J. Hammond Trumbull and Charles J. Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1850-90), XV, 129, 142, 180, 201; New Haven Town Records, Office of the City Clerk, Hall of Records, V, 54-57.

11. Trumbull and Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, XV, 221, 247, 251, 254; Charles J. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1894 and continuing), II, 55.

12. Trumbull and Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, XV, 455; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut*, I, 40; Samuel Motte to Jonathan Trumbull, August 20, 1779, "Trumbull Papers," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 7th Series, II, 422-23.

Constructed on the West River at the base of West Rock, the mill was much more advantageously situated than the fort. It also served the town and the state better, producing much of the powder used by the militia and state troops.[13]

But the enthusiasm that state leaders had originally shown for the defense of New Haven waned by the end of 1777 when Thompson and his troops fulfilled their period of service. The Council of Safety neglected to replace them. So on December 9 the New Haven town meeting, concerned over the town's vulnerable position, voted that the selectmen "cause six men to be hired to take care of the fort at the Black Rock and four men to take care of the guns in the town plott, to be paid out of the town treasury untill the Assembly shall order men into this town to guard the same."[14]

The next month the General Assembly remedied its oversight by ordering that a company of twenty-seven men—shortly increased to thirty-nine—be stationed at New Haven. These men were "to do the duty and services of artillery men or matrosses so much and so far as may be necessary . . . ," and were commanded by Captain Phineas Bradley. Daniel Bishop, Evelyn Pierpont, and Azel Kimberly served as lieutenants in the company.

For most of the next year these thirty-nine men were the only full-time soldiers guarding the town. This was the company Tom Painter would soon join.[15]

The inconsistent concern of state officials for New Haven's defense caused the town meeting to vote in March, 1778, to establish a committee "to view the town, judge what is needful to be done for the defense of the town, and make their report. . . . " Later that month the meeting accepted the committee's report and forwarded it to the Council for Safety. The report recommended the construction of two small works at the West Bridge, the building of a redoubt on the east side of West River near the powder mill, and the petitioning of the governor for the assignment of two or three hundred recruits to the town. Ominously the report noted that East Haven and West Haven were so vulnerable to attack that the construction of additional defenses at either place would be futile.[16]

Benjamin Trumbull, pastor at North Haven, presented the request for troops to the governor and Council on March 27. In response the Council assigned two

13. Trumbull and Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, XV, 251.

14. New Haven Town Records, V, 76.

15. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut*, I, 478, 520; II, 21; Henry P. Johnston, *The Record of Connecticut Men in the Military and Naval Service during the War of the Revolution* (Hartford, 1889), p. 551.

16. New Haven Town Records, V, 82-85.

companies of state troops from Colonel Thaddeus Cook's regiment to guard New Haven. But these men soon departed. Captain Jesse Curtis of Waterbury and his company replaced Cook's men in October, 1778. By the end of the year, however, they were also gone.[17]

In August, 1778, the militia was reorganized, and men living in the New Haven area came under the overall command of Brigadier General Andrew Ward of Guilford. Ward was a seasoned soldier who made up in experience what he lacked in formal training. A veteran of the French and Indian War and the battles of White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, and Saratoga, he knew his business. He was one of the few reasons for confidence in a generally shaky plan of defense. His second-in-command was Colonel Sabin of New Haven.[18]

Ward continued to rely upon the state company of matrosses commanded by Bradley as the first line of defense for New Haven. He had confidence in Bradley and his men. In January the Assembly increased the company's size to seventy men and in May resolved to continue the guards until January 1, 1780. At this point Bradley divided his men into three contingents: one under Lieutenants Pierpont and Bishop served at East Haven and Black Rock Fort, another under Azel Kimberly went to West Haven, and the remaining troops were under his own command in New Haven itself.[19]

The task of Bradley's men was to warn the town of any impending raid, blunt the initial thrust of the enemy, and then provide a nucleus around which the militia under Ward and Sabin, local volunteers, and the Second Company of Guards, by this time commanded by James Hillhouse, were to form. Other state troops and Continental soldiers were too distant to offer any real hope of assistance. Even Ward was several hours away in Guilford. But Sabin could do the job until Ward arrived, or so Bradley believed. Young Hillhouse, on the other hand, was an unknown. Barely four years out of Yale, he might perform well or he might not; Bradley had no way of knowing.

Bradley's men in West Haven watched the British fleet as it maneuvered into place. Young Tom Painter looked for some sign of the enemy's plans. As he speculated with Lieutenant Kimberly and the other guards about what these might be, he knew that he and the seventy other men under Bradley would be the ones to meet the enemy and if possible delay the invaders until help appeared.

In the center of New Haven, high in the steeple of Yale Chapel, Ezra Stiles also watched the dark British ships. He had prepared for the worst. His own and

17. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut*, I, 576-77, 582; II, 87, 95, 116.

18. *Ibid.*, II, 112, 167.

19. *Ibid.*, 181-82, 282.

the college records were already packed; so too was some of his furniture. His family was also ready to move. He was shocked by the nonchalance of his neighbors. All too well he knew that behind him was an unprepared New Haven. He could only guess what the British intended to do. The answer to the mystery of their intentions was on the ships that lay just outside the harbor before him.[20]

The Plan

In 1779 Connecticut was straddled by British forces, part of them at Newport and a larger contingent in New York. The commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, Sir Henry Clinton, was also in New York.

Clinton was forty-nine years old in 1779. He had made his reputation in Germany during the Seven Years War, a reputation further enhanced by distinguished service at Bunker Hill and in the battle of Long Island. When Sir William Howe returned to England in May, 1778, in the wake of the British disaster at Saratoga, Clinton became commander in North America.

"I am a shy bitch," the short and fleshy Clinton wrote of himself. He was more than shy. He was too sensitive, too eager to take offense, unable to get on with his fellow officers, especially during times of stress. He was also plagued with self-doubt. His uncertainty grew as he saw his advice regularly rejected by London and his plans die before fruition.

But for all his quirks of personality, Clinton possessed a keen mind. He had shown his capacity for sound strategic thinking during the capture of New York in September, 1776. That his elaborate plans often came to nothing was more often the fault of the Cabinet in London than of any defect in his thinking.[21]

In the autumn of 1778, his superiors removed Major General James Grant and 5,000 men from Clinton's command and sent them to the Caribbean. This left the commander with what he felt to be too few men to defeat the Americans. Unless the lost troops were restored to him and new reinforcements sent, he saw only one course open to him—resignation. Without additional men, he might as well be back in England.

To explain his position, Clinton ordered Major Duncan Drummond to London. Drummond was personally to carry Clinton's ultimatum to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Colonies and Sir Henry's immediate superior. If the general were denied the men necessary to do his job, he wanted to be recalled. Fearing that Germain would refuse to consider such a

20. *Connecticut Journal*, June 23, 1779.

21. William B. Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the American Revolution* (New York, 1964), pp. 39, 524; Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (New York, 1971), p. 79.

demand, Clinton instructed Drummond to seek the assistance of the Duke of Newcastle, Sir Henry's cousin, in making the case.

Clinton had predicted Germain's response correctly. Lord George refused to hear of the general's returning. "Good God, M[r.] Drummond is it possible that Sir Henry Clinton can think of desiring to come home . . . ?" Germain demanded. When the matter was brought before George III, he agreed that Clinton must stay where he was. Even the intercession of Newcastle failed to change the king's position. British officers had been abandoning America as if it were a lost cause. Lord Richard Howe and his brother, Sir William Howe, had both resigned, as had Lord Charles Cornwallis. Clinton had to be kept at his post.

But although the Cabinet denied Clinton's request to return home, it did offer him enough to keep him in America. On January 23, 1779, Germain informed Clinton of the Cabinet's decision on his requests. Sixty-six hundred additional troops were to go to him in the spring, Germain promised, and more would follow in the summer. This represented many fewer troops than Clinton wanted, but Germain believed this number would hold the commander-in-chief in America.

Germain was not satisfied merely to send a pledge of reinforcements. He also dispatched a series of emphatic suggestions about how Clinton ought to fight the war in America. Germain's own career had once been in the military, and those years, he believed, provided him with sufficient wisdom to tell Clinton how to run his war.[22]

Until 1770, Lord George Germain had been known as Lord George Sackville. It was as a Sackville that he had made his reputation as a soldier. During the War of the Austrian Succession, Lord George demonstrated that he was a brave and talented officer. But while serving in Germany in the Seven Years War, a controversy developed between him and Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, commander of the allied army with which the British troops were serving. The upshot was Lord George's request for a court martial and a subsequent verdict of guilty of disobeying the orders of Ferdinand, a superior officer. The court declared Lord George unfit for service.

Though completely disgraced, he insisted upon remaining in public life. He still retained a seat in Parliament and from that position began to develop a new career as a politician. In 1770 he changed his name. By 1775 he had become Secretary of State for the Colonies.

A tall, large-framed man, Germain was aloof to the point of arrogance in public. But he had a certain disarming charm, born in part from the confidence

22. Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, pp. 260 ff.

of one accustomed to others' deference. He was also bright, ambitious, and powerful.[23]

As Secretary of State, he had one overwhelming weakness. He never comprehended the American Revolution as anything more than a conspiracy of a small group of self-seeking men. He insisted that the bulk of the population of North America was loyal to the Crown. His task during the Revolution, then, was merely to put down a plot against the empire. By the vigorous use of force to demonstrate Britain's will, coupled with concessions to the loyal majority, he hoped to end the civil unrest.[24]

In the instructions that he sent to Clinton on January 23, Germain tried to apply his overall concept of the Revolution to the specific situation faced by the general. "I will state to you the outline of the plan for the future conduct of the war in North America submitted to the King, and which His Majesty has thought fit to approve," began Lord George. First, he hoped Clinton could either force General George Washington into a decisive battle or drive him away from any heavily populated areas. Isolating him would allow the people to follow their inclinations "and renounce the authority of the Congress and return their allegiance to His Majesty. . . . " He further urged an attack on Virginia and Maryland to allow loyal citizens "to deliver themselves from the tyranny and oppression of the rebel committees and to form a force sufficient to withstand any efforts of the Congress to continue them under its authority." Finally, Lord George suggested raids on the coasts of New England and Chesapeake Bay. These would deprive the rebels of the means of fitting out privateers and of conducting foreign trade, thus demonstrating the folly of continuing the revolt.[25]

While Germain concocted plans to suppress a rebellion in a land he had never seen, a land 3,000 miles from England, Clinton bided his time in New York awaiting either reinforcements or release. Little diversion was available, so he had to find his pleasure where he could. "I saw him [Clinton] at 3 o'clock pass my window with several horsemen, as I have often this winter, following a Hessian Jager [*sic*], who dragged a bone pursued by a dogg," wrote William Smith,

23. Alan Valentine, *Lord George Germain* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 17-18, 376.

24. Gerald Saxon Brown, *The American Secretary: The Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain* (Ann Arbor, 1963), pp. 178-79; Lord George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, January 23 and September 27, 1779, "Sir Henry Clinton Papers," William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

25. Lord George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, January 23, 1779, in William B. Willcox, ed., *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns* (New Haven, 1954), pp. 397-99; Lord George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, March 21, 1778, Public Record Office, London, 30, 55/9, ERD/1969. (Hereafter the Public Record Office will be identified as PRO.)

former Chief Justice of New York and then living as a loyalist refugee within British lines. "All full speed over fences, thro' fields, &c." The whole thing, Smith regarded as an "unmanly sport," "a low game." But who could blame Clinton? He could do nothing without either the means to win the war or permission to resign his hopeless command.[26]

Sir Henry received Germain's instructions on April 24. He then waited nearly a month before answering. When he did, his letter was as angry as any Lord George would ever receive. It noted that the Secretary had made only a recommendation. "But," said Clinton, "by that recommendation you secure the right of blaming me if I should adopt other measures and fail." The general had but one choice. The recommendation had the effect of an order. "I am on the spot . . . ," he admitted. Germain's advice must be followed. "For God's sake, my Lord," he concluded, "if you wish me to do anything, leave me to myself and let me adapt my efforts to the hourly change of circumstances!"[27]

As angry and discouraged as he was, Clinton had at least received the promise of reinforcements. So, ever mindful of the necessity of fitting Germain's recommendations into his own strategy, Sir Henry began to plan. First, he scheduled a series of coastal raids to prevent reinforcements from reaching Washington's army, then in New Jersey. The next move would be against the American posts on the lower Hudson River. This, he hoped, would compel Washington to abandon New Jersey for the remote highlands of New York. Then when his own reinforcements arrived from England, he would force Washington into a decisive battle. An American defeat would relieve the pressure on New York and allow the British army to strike into the Carolinas. Success there would mean the end of the war. By such a carefully developed scheme, Clinton hoped for victory in America, but if this eluded him he could still claim to have followed Germain's advice. His was a plan that he believed would work, but it was also one that would prevent his being undercut from behind by his own superior, the powerful Lord George Germain.

During the beginning of May, the coastal raids on the shores of Chesapeake Bay began. At the end of the month, the British struck Stony Point and Verplanck's Point on the Hudson. Washington responded as Clinton had hoped. The rebel commander left New Jersey and brought his army to West Point to prevent the fall of that important post to the British. Clinton now needed only his reinforcements to strike a final blow against Washington. The rebels had to hold West Point, even if it meant fighting the decisive battle Washington was

26. William Smith, *Historical Memoirs from 26 August 1778 to 12 November 1783* (New York, 1971), p. 78.

27. Sir Henry Clinton to Lord George Germain, May 22, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* p. 408; same to same, May 14, 1779, PRO, 30, 55/16, ERD/1969.

hoping to avoid. While Clinton waited for reinforcements, he attempted to draw Washington out of the highlands and into a more vulnerable position. The Americans would then be ready for the kill when additional British troops arrived. With this object in mind, Sir Henry began to push forward his plans for raids on the New England coast, raids that Germain had so eagerly recommended in January.[28]

Several specific advantages could be derived from raids on the Connecticut shore in particular. The Royal Navy was eager to destroy the privateers that were operating from Connecticut ports to prey on British and loyalist trade on Long Island Sound. In the spring of 1779, Clinton himself had complained that "the rebel privateers [had] grown so numerous and daring that I every hour dreaded to hear of the capture of the Cork victualers, to whose arrival alone we trusted for a supply." Sir George Collier, temporarily commanding British naval forces in America, argued that the privateers had "almost totally destroyed the trade of His Majesty's faithful subjects passing through the Sound. . . . " The coastal raids would solve the problem of rebel privateers.[29]

Another factor in favor of the raids was less a problem than an opportunity. The British, in both London and New York, regarded western Connecticut as a loyalist stronghold. If this area were raided and if Washington and his Continentals were unable to offer any relief from the raids, British leaders believed that the population would become disillusioned with the rebellion, follow its natural inclinations, and realign itself with the Crown. The idea was enthusiastically held by Germain and coincidentally by William Tryon, former colonial governor of North Carolina and of New York and the man selected by Clinton to lead the raids on Connecticut.

Tryon learned of his assignment on June 17. In one respect, he was a strange choice to head the expedition; he and Clinton disagreed strongly about strategy and about what was required to defeat the rebels. Sir Henry, convinced that victory would be hard bought and that the ideals of the Revolution were powerful forces in the hearts and minds of Americans, believed that the rebel army had to be thoroughly defeated before the people would return their allegiance to the king.

Tryon, on the other hand, contended that the vast bulk of the American population was really loyal to George III and had either been deluded or coerced into supporting the revolt. The Americans, he wrote to Germain,

28. Willcox, *Portrait of a General,* pp. 271 ff.; Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 129-30.

29. Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 128-29; Sir George Collier to Sir Henry Clinton, June 5, 1779, "Clinton Papers"; Sir George Collier to Philip Stephens, July 27, 1779, PRO, ADM 1/1612, 16511; Patrick Ferguson to Sir Henry Clinton, May 27, 1779, in Brown, *Loyalist Operations.*

"are kept by the tyranny and misrule of their leaders in the blindest ignorance of the true state of their situation." He was sure that the former colonists would see the error of their way and eventually return to the fold. Soon, he argued, the demagogues who lead the rebellion "will be torn to pieces by their own countrymen whom they have forcibly dragged, in opposition to their principles and duty . . . to take up arms against their lawful soveragn [*sic*]. . . ."[30]

To encourage the return of the faithful and the overthrow of their deluders, Tryon advocated generous concessions to the colonies. Concessions would make the Americans understand that their true interest lay within the empire, not in some wild scheme of independence. Yet he believed that with the offer of concessions must also go a show of force, to indicate Britain's refusal to tolerate treason or to abide resistance to the sovereign power of the king. "Vigorous and hostile depredations" would awaken the American people to the benefits of continued unity with the mother country.

The best form that these depredations could take, he argued, would be coastal raids. While Clinton saw such raids as subservient to his main objective—drawing Washington into a decisive battle—Tryon viewed the raids as ends in themselves, as devices to encourage the loyal majority to reassert its loyalty.[31]

In supporting the concept of the raids, Tryon reasoned much like Germain had when he first suggested them. Both men believed the Revolution was a sham perpetrated by a small group of demagogues on an unthinking majority. Both believed that if the demagogues could be exposed, the rebellion would collapse. The raids were the key to the whole dilemma. "My opinions remain unchangeable respecting the utility of depredatory excersions," wrote Tryon. "I think rebellion must soon totter if those exertions are reiterated and made to extremity." Although vain and ambitious, Tryon was not eager to make Americans suffer. He had no appetite for cruelty for its own sake. But he was intensely loyal to the British system, which he believed served its citizens better than any other form of government. Ultimately, to bring the former colonists back to the Crown, even if this meant they had to suffer in the process, was to serve them well, he argued.[32]

30. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* pp. 86, 118; William Tryon to Lord George Germain, April 6, 1776; William Tryon to Samuel H. Parsons, November 23, 1777, both in Edmund B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (New York, 1853-87), VIII, 673, 736.

31. William Tryon to Lord George Germain, September 5, 1778, *ibid.*, p. 750; same to same, July 28, 1779, in Henry P. Johnston, *Observations on Judge Jones' Loyalist History* (New York, 1880), p. 58.

32. *Ibid.;* William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* p. 414; William Tryon to Lord George Germain, July 28, 1779, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to New York,* VIII, 769.

While Tryon commanded the troops that would actually raid the coast, Sir George Collier was in charge of the naval units involved. A talented officer, whom historians have denied the recognition due his clearly distinguished service in America, he was at the time of the raids acting commander of the Royal Navy in North America. Widely read, Collier himself wrote an account of his travels on the Continent as well as a play, *Selima and Azor,* which was favorably received on Drury Lane in 1776.

Collier and Clinton were personally close and professionally of one mind. None of the differences that existed between Tryon and Sir Henry separated the naval commander and the commander-in-chief.[33]

Tryon disliked Collier even more than he did Clinton and probably for the same reason. Like Clinton, Collier refused to believe the loyalists were the key to the British success in North America. Tryon did. The former governor's frequent attempts to build strategy around the loyalists were regularly resisted by these two officers, professional military men who depended for whatever success they might hope to achieve on other professionals.[34]

The third ranking officer on the expedition was George Garth, at the time an acting brigadier general. A professional soldier whose regimental affiliation was with the First Regiment of Foot Guards, Garth did well in the army, eventually becoming a full general. He had no particular taste for fighting civilians, but he was a man who accepted, largely without question, the duties assigned him.

Clinton's instructions to Tryon were dated July 2, 1779. Obviously Clinton, Collier, and Tryon had carefully discussed the expedition, and the written instructions were only an outline of their plan. The British force was to strike first at New Haven, spend only about twelve hours there, and then move on to the next objective, Fairfield. After Fairfield, Stratford and Milford were to be attacked. New London was to be the final target, "but in my opinion," wrote Clinton, "it must not be attempted without there are vessels to make it an object, and to do it you must be reinforced." To strike at Connecticut's foremost port required reinforcements, but before he would provide them, Clinton wanted to see what happened at New Haven, Fairfield, and Milford. In the meantime, Collier would send three warships to blockade the harbor at New London. They were to remain there until the outcome of the first raids was known.[35]

33. Valentine, *Germain,* pp. 341-42.

34. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 118; William Tryon to Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot, June 29, 1779; William Tryon to Lord George Germain, March 1, 1779, both in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to New York,* VIII, 759, 772.

35. Sir Henry Clinton to William Tryon, July 2, 1779, PRO, CO5, 98, 9160. For British activity around New London, see Charles Cahoon to Christopher Greene, July 6, 1779, "Horatio Gates Papers," New-York Historical Society.

While the troops prepared to embark, Tryon and Collier wrote an address they planned to distribute along the coast. Based upon Tryon's theory that most Americans were loyal and that their interest would be best served by their rejoining the empire, the address expressed the hope that the people of Connecticut "would recover from the frenzy which had distracted this unhappy country; and we believe the day to be near when the greater part of this continent will begin to blush at their delusion." The address urged Americans to return to their allegiance, promised safety for whoever would "remain in peace, at his usual place of residence," and warned those who would resist that Britain's wrath was sincere. Tryon had 500 copies of the address printed and put aboard ship. All was now ready for the expedition to begin.[36]

At five on the afternoon of July 2, the fleet left New York and began moving up the East River. The "Renown," "Thames," and "Otter" were to go on to New London. The "Camilla," a frigate and the largest ship in the squadron, the sloop "Scorpion," the brig "Halifax," and the galley "Hussar" were bound for New Haven. The fleet made the difficult passage through Hell's Gate and rendezvoused at Whitestone Bay at nine that evening.[37]

Waiting at the bay were transports loaded with troops, 2,600 men in all. Part of this force had just arrived from Rhode Island and included the 54th Regiment, which had distinguished itself in New York during 1776; the Regiment Landgraf, a Hessian unit that had fought at Fort Washington and Newport; a loyalist regiment known as the King's American Regiment; and Captain Peter Traille's company of artillery. The remainder of Tryon's command had been serving in New York. These were the 7th Royal Fusileers; the famous 23rd Royal Welsh Fusileers who had fought with such bravery at Bunker Hill; a regiment of Jaegers, a light infantry force composed of former woodsmen and hunters from the forests of Germany; and the flank companies of the Guards.

In this last force, the Americans faced a formidable enemy. The British army organized its regiments into ten companies. Of the ten companies, eight were regular or battalion companies, known as "hatmen" because of their tricorn headgear. The other two companies were the flank companies, and these represented the picked men of the regiment. One of the companies, the grenadiers, included the tallest, strongest, and bravest men of the regiment; the other, the light-infantry, was composed of the small, agile, quick-witted men of the regiment.

36. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* pp. 122-24.

37. Sir George Collier to Philip Stephens, July 27, 1779, PRO, ADM 1/1612, 16511; G.J. Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services Performed in America," National Maritime Museum, London, HIS/7. The logs of the "Camilla," "Hussar," "Scorpion," "Thames," and "Otter" may be found respectively in PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; PRO, ADM 51, 872, ERD/1615; PRO, ADM 51, 982, ERD/1590; PRO, ADM 51, 664, ERD/1590.

Of all the regiments in the British army, none enjoyed more prestige than the Guards. They were the "household" troops, the bodyguards of the king. To serve in the flank companies of the Guards was to serve with the best men of the best regiments in the army. These were the troops that every American militiaman dreaded to face.

Tryon's troops carried five field guns with them, four light three-pounders and one Ligonier howitzer. The three-pounders were probably mounted on Congreve carriages which allowed them to be transported with a minimum of bother. Because of its size, the howitzer was drawn by three horses. Tryon would need the weapon only if confronted by a heavily defended fort.[38]

From Whitestone Bay, the fleet, now joined by the transports, rounded Throg's Neck and moved into Long Island Sound. Progress was slow because of light winds. The following morning, the ships visited Huntington Bay long enough for Commodore Collier to board the "Camilla" and hoist "his broad pendant," thus making the "Camilla" the flagship of the fleet.

Light winds continued to be a problem all day on the third, and for part of July 4 the ships were becalmed. Not until 1:00 a.m. on July 5 did the ships finally arrive off New Haven harbor.[39]

In the morning the expedition would strike. Captain Patrick Ferguson, a favorite of Clinton who had recently gathered detailed information on the coastal towns of Connecticut, had reported that New Haven would fall easily. But as confident as Ferguson's reports had been, many British privates pondered what the morning would bring and wondered how well the people of New Haven would defend their home.[40]

West Haven

Monday, July 5, promised to be even hotter than the day before. The humidity still hung over the Sound, and the light winds that had so reluctantly carried the British to New Haven had all but disappeared.[41]

President Stiles was back in the chapel tower before dawn, this time accompanied by several students. In West Haven young Tom Painter waited at the shore to learn what the British would do.

His answer came at daybreak. From the "Camilla" roared the blast of a cannon; immediately Stiles in town and Painter on the beach saw a string of boats begin to

38. James Pattison to Lord Viscount Townshend, July 4, 1779, "Letters of Major General James Pattison," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1875,* VIII, 87.

39. Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services."

40. Brown, *Loyalist Operations.*

41. The weather is described in the logs of the British ships. See the log of the "Camilla," for example, PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

appear astern of the transports. The boats assembled and began to pull for shore. Even as far away as Stiles was, he could see that the boats were loaded with troops.[42]

Chaos overran New Haven. Some men rushed to meet the invaders. Others first wanted to get their wives, children, and valuables out of town before worrying about the town's defense. Others, either because they trusted in the benevolence of the British or because they were frozen by fear, did nothing.

Women and children, accompanying hastily loaded wagons, began moving out the roads to nearby North Haven, Mt. Carmel, and Cheshire. Stiles sent four of his daughters to Mt. Carmel; his eldest daughter happened to be in Hartford at the time. He packed the college records, his own papers, and part of his furniture off with his youngest son, Isaac, not yet fifteen.[43]

James Hillhouse's wife, Sarah, was pregnant. He hated to inflict the tiresome journey to North Haven on her in such heat. But to remain in town was even more dangerous, he believed.[44]

The roads were full. William Sherman, son of Roger, who represented Connecticut in the Continental Congress, threw a bed and a couple of bags of clothing on a wagon and urged his wife and children to hurry to safety in the north.[45]

Isaac Dickerman took an ox-cart into town to the home of his friend Ebenezer Huggins to help him remove his furniture. As the partially loaded cart moved out the road to Derby, persons walking along the road hoisted on their own goods. By the time he was out of town, Dickerman had all he could do to keep his cargo from falling off. His oxen resented pulling so heavy a load up the hills that surrounded the town.[46]

If Dickerman kept his load on his cart, he was one of the fortunate few who did. Many unlucky refugees lost part of their valuables, only to have them found by strangers or trod under by livestock being driven out of town. Elizabeth Mansfield seems to have lost most of what she tried to take. Between New Haven and North Haven, she lost "one changeable lute-string gown and petticoat, blue . . . , one pink figur'd grogram, one stomp'd cambrick, one red and white copper plate,

42. William A. Thompson, Extracts from Autobiographical Notes, Yale Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Yale University; Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 353-54.

43. Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 357.

44. Sarah Lloyd Hillhouse to Rebecca Woolsey, July 19, 1779, "Hillhouse Family Papers," Yale University.

45. William Sherman to Benedict Arnold, September 30, 1780, Connecticut Historical Society.

46. Chauncey Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven by the British Troops," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society,* II, 58-59.

one holland, three white skirts, two pairs shoes, one wrought lawn apron, ditto two plain, one check'd muslin, . . . three ivory stick fans, eleven pair gloves and mits, one black satin cloak, do. one lawn, and several other articles." One would hope that others packed with slightly more care. This was not likely for after the raid, notices in the *Connecticut Journal* attested to the amount and variety of items lost. One man advertised that "a feather bed was taken up in the garden of the subscriber in the 6th of July last. The owner may have said bed, proving their property and paying charges."[47]

Rutherford Trowbridge's family could avoid the heat and dust of the road to North Haven. The family lived on the harbor. When Trowbridge heard the British were coming, he put his wife and children in a boat and headed them up the Quinnipiac River to North Haven.[48]

While the confusion grew in New Haven, Tom Painter and the other state troops waited for the British boats to arrive within gunshot in West Haven. The random fire from the "Hussar," which was covering the landing, presented no danger. The men tensed as the boats approached. They would be able to fire only four or five balls between the time the enemy came within range and the time the troops landed. The boats moved closer. The heat was awful. Would Kimberly never give the order to fire? At last he spoke, and the fighting began. As soon as the first boat neared the shore, the lieutenant had his men up and headed for the pastures behind the Old Field Beach. His small force had done what it could; no good would result from its attempting to engage several hundred seasoned troops.[49]

The enemy quickly disembarked and formed a line of march. They proceeded from the beach to the West Haven Green. As Painter looked back, he must have appreciated Kimberly's wisdom in deciding to withdraw.

At the head of the column marched the grenadiers, large powerful men, looking even more imposing in their high bearskin caps. Their bright red coats were faced with blue, indicating they were of the Guards. On the flanks were the light infantrymen. They wore small leather headgear, and their red coats were cut short to form jackets.

In the center were the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusileers, also in bearskin caps; the 54th, wearing the traditional tricorn; and the Jaegers, their green coats reminiscent of their backgrounds as huntsmen. With them were two field pieces and part of Captain Traille's artillery company. These men wore short blue jackets, faced with red.

47. *Connecticut Journal,* August 11, 1779.

48. Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 73.

49. Log of the "Hussar," PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; Howe, ed., "Reminiscences of Painter," p. 245.

The British troops were poorly outfitted for the heat they encountered in Connecticut. Under their coats, they wore short, sleeveless waistcoats, red for the light infantry and white for the others. Their trousers were white. Over their left shoulders hung a wide belt supporting their cartridge boxes. Their bayonets and scabbards were attached to a narrow waist belt. In addition, each man carried a knapsack, canteen, and his musket. Every soldier was weighted down with nearly fifty pounds in all, no easy burden in the sultry heat of that July morning.

General Garth was in command of the force that landed at West Haven. With him was William Chandler, a man born in New Haven in 1758 and a graduate of Yale, class of 1773, coincidently Hillhouse's class. Chandler was a loyalist. His father, Joshua Chandler, had been a prominent attorney in New Haven. In fact, the elder Chandler had served for several years as a selectman and a member of the General Assembly. But his loyalist sympathies had resulted in his being confined to his home in North Haven after the war began. Now his son William was guiding an invading army into their native town.[50]

The march from the beach to the West Haven Green was easy. Kimberly and his men were already beyond the Green awaiting the arrival of additional defenders. At the Green, the troops ate a leisurely breakfast, apparently in no hurry to push on.[51]

By the time the British resumed the march, the defenders had developed a scheme to slow the enemy advance. James Hillhouse, of the Second Company of Governor's Guards, led fifty or so men into the woods that paralleled the road from West Haven toward New Haven. His job was to harass the British troops in hopes of delaying them long enough to allow a larger group of defenders under Hezekiah Sabin and Phineas Bradley to pull up the planks from the West Bridge and to set up defenses on the opposite side. With only the skeleton of the bridge remaining, Sabin and Bradley were sure they could keep the British from crossing. They had with them a field piece larger than any the enemy possessed.

Hillhouse's force was small and diverse. He had local farmers serving with him, men like Simeon Sperry and his neighbors from Woodbridge. Captain John Gilbert brought Asa Todd, Joseph Dorman, Samuel Woodin, and Silas Woodin with him from Hamden; all would be dead by noon. Many of Hillhouse's men were Yale students. Elizur Goodrich of the class of 1779 would one day be mayor of New Haven, a member of Congress, and professor of law at his alma mater; when he learned that the British had arrived, he went with Hillhouse to meet them.

George Welles belonged to the same class. He was born in Glastonbury and would eventually become an innkeeper in Pennsylvania. He, too, fought with Hillhouse. Ezra Stiles, Jr. was among the first to join the defenders. He described

50. *Connecticut Journal,* July 7, 1779; Gipson, *American Loyalist,* p. 368.

51. Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 36-37.

himself as "a frail lump of blustering mortality," but he was anything but frail on that July 5. Wherever the fighting was, there he was likely to be.[52]

The students were joined by Professor Naphtali Daggett, former president of the college. With an ancient fowling piece and mounted on an almost equally ancient mare, Daggett came ready to do his part. What the respected gentleman lacked in stamina, he more than made up in enthusiasm.

The defenders began sniping at the enemy as soon as the British started out from the West Haven Green. The American plan was to strike the advanced guard and then fall back. Hillhouse had no hope of stopping the enemy troops; all he could do was to slow them down.

While he and his men kept up their fire on Garth's troops, Bradley and Sabin oversaw the dismantling of the West Bridge. If the British could be prevented from entering New Haven here, they would have to march several miles to the north to cross the river and the salt marshes that surrounded it. If they were delayed long enough, the militia might be gathered in sufficient force to prevent their entering town at all.

The men at the West Bridge worked frantically. At the first word that the British were landing, David Atwater of Hamden had taken a team of horses to the harbor and with several men removed a six-pound brass gun from an armed vessel there. The gun was then dragged out to the West Bridge where Bradley oversaw its implacement. Bradley also had a field piece that belonged to his company of matrosses.

As more and more men gathered at the bridge, Sabin sent some to join Hillhouse and put others to work building defenses. Even at this early hour, still before nine, the heat was intense. Both horses and men perspired; the still air was itself too saturated to evaporate the sweat of either man or beast.

Opposite the West Bridge was Milford Hill, where the road from New Haven rose out of the marshy lowlands. Here the fighting was fierce, and here the first American to die in the West Haven fighting fell. He was John Hotchkiss, forty-seven, a graduate of Yale and the owner of a printing business in New Haven. Here, too, British Adjutant James Campbell was mortally wounded. He died in a nearby house where he was taken for treatment. Another American killed in the fighting on Milford Hill was Aaron Bradley. He was part of a company from Derby that had answered the alarm.

Just beyond Milford Hill, Professor Daggett tasted the bitterness of war. He was moving down the hill when he was surprised by the enemy's advance guard. He ran for a clump of bushes and despite the British fire managed to reach the shelter safely. There he hid himself and took aim with his old piece and fired at the

52. *Ibid.,* pp. 41-42, 77-78; Ford, "The Defense of New Haven," p. 35; Hoadly *et al.,* eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 545; Ezra Stiles, Jr. to David MacClure, August 24, 1779, "Ezra Stiles Papers," Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University.

advancing party. Realizing he had no chance of firing again, he decided to surrender. "I beged [*sic*] for quarter," he later said, "and that they would spare my life." They advanced upon him and "called me a damned old rebel and swore they would kill me instantly." They asked the old man why he had fired on them. "I replied, because it is the exercise of war." The soldiers then beat the professor, took his knee buckles and shoes, and made him their prisoner.

But the capture of Daggett was more than offset by the American victory at the West Bridge. When the main body of British troops reached the bridge, Garth attempted to cross. It was no use. The river was too deep to ford, and only one or two men could balance their way across the bridge timbers at a time. The American fire was so intense that none of the British made it over the wooden frame.

Garth spoke with Chandler about alternate routes into town. The British had no choice but to march to Hotchkisstown (now called Westville) and try to cross there. Bradley and Sabin had held the bridge and so won an hour or so for the militia to gather farther up the river.[53]

As the British started up what is now Forest Road, they learned that the rebel snipers were still hiding in the woods along the route. What they did not know was that Hillhouse had joined Bradley and Sabin on the town side of the river and that the sharpshooters were now commanded by a former officer of the Continental Army and a man destined one day to be Vice-President of the United States: Aaron Burr.

Burr had resigned from the army in April, 1779, because of illness. He had suffered from heat exhaustion at the battle of Monmouth and could not seem to recover his health. So in July he had come to New Haven to rest. But when he heard of the raid, he immediately offered his services. Now it was his job to delay the British until the men at the West Bridge could race upstream to the next crossing point, the Derby Bridge at Hotchkisstown.

The route Sabin, Bradley, and Hillhouse had to follow was through low, wet country. The field pieces slowed them greatly, and they had been reluctant to leave the bridge for fear the enemy would double back to try again to cross there. This gave the British a considerable lead, a lead which the dry, hard road they were traveling helped them to keep. Burr had to slow them.

He and his men did what they could, but the British were determined to push on. They reached Hotchkisstown ahead of Bradley and Sabin but stopped while Garth sent a small detachment of men to destroy the powder mill at the base of West Rock. The mill had been carefully located to make attack difficult, and the

53. Townshend, *British Invasion,* p. 62; *Connecticut Journal,* July 7, 1779; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 41, 42-43, 48-49, 60; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 548-49.

Derby militia that defended it not only held off the enemy but also took several captives.[54]

The main British force, meanwhile, had surged on toward the Derby Bridge, the point at which Whalley Avenue crosses the West River. The light infantry forded the river about eighty yards below the bridge and provided cover as the main body passed over the bridge itself.

The British had barely begun to cross when Sabin and Bradley finally put three field pieces into action from behind some hastily constructed defenses. Sharp fighting followed, but the Americans, despite the arrival of militiamen from neighboring towns, were too badly outnumbered to hold the British. Sabin ordered a retreat, and the enemy moved on down the approximate routes of modern Whalley Avenue and Goffe Street.[55]

The Americans pressed the enemy as best they could. No longer were they fighting for time; now they were fighting for their homes and families. The men from Derby, the ones who had held the powder mill, placed themselves in the line of the enemy's column and gave and received fire. But the British kept coming.

The most intense fighting of the day occurred where the road into town passed the Beaver Swamp, at a place called Ditch Corner, near the intersection of what is now Goffe and Country streets. The swamp on the north forced the British to funnel their troops into a narrow column. The Americans struck here, hoping against all odds to keep the British from entering the town. The fighting was ferocious. James and Timothy Bassett were among the defenders. On furlough from the Continental Army, both were veterans accustomed to the close fighting they found at Ditch Corner. Just before he felt his own arm shattered by a ball, James thought he saw his brother fall mortally wounded. He had the grim task of telling his father that Timothy had been killed. But when the elder Bassett went to claim his son's body, he found him not dead at all but alive, although seriously wounded.

Many fell at Ditch Corner, both British and American. But the British were too strong to be held. They rammed past and entered the center of New Haven.

It was now 12:40 p.m. Nearly eight hours after the first troops had landed at West Haven, the British were in New Haven. Some fighting continued in the town itself, but generally the defenders had to regroup and decide what they could do next.[56]

54. Aaron Burr to (?), February 5, 1833, Marietta College Library, Marietta, Ohio.

55. Abel Buell to Nathaniel Townsend, July 16, 1779, Lockwood House, Norwalk; Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 354.

56. *Connecticut Journal,* July 7, 1779; Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 354; Townshend, *British Invasion,* pp. 60-61; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 50-51.

While Garth was pushing into town, Tryon himself led a second force against East Haven. Because he had to wait until the boats used to land Garth's men had returned to the transports and his men had loaded into them, Tryon did not reach the East Haven shore until after 10:00 that morning.

His force consisted of the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusileers; the King's American Regiment commanded by Edmund Fanning, a native of Connecticut and a man close to Tryon; and the Hessian Landgraf Regiment. Tryon also had two field pieces and a small detachment of artillery.

The general's plan was to march up through East Haven and seize the ferry that crossed to New Haven. Garth, who had the earlier start, was by this time to have marched through New Haven, burned a substantial part of the town, and prepared to re-embark from an area called the Neck. Tryon's men would then board small boats at East Haven and return to the fleet.

But Tryon failed to realize that Garth was already behind schedule. The determined resistance of the militia had slowed him considerably. What this would mean for Tryon's plan was still uncertain.[57]

One-third of captain Phineas Bradley's matrosses were in East Haven. Part of them were waiting near what is now called Lighthouse Point for the British to land. These men were commanded by Lieutenant Evelyn Pierpont. Another group was at Black Rock Fort. Lieutenant Daniel Bishop was its commander. These state troops were supplemented by militia and local citizens. Joseph Tuttle and his seventeen-year-old son Josiah had joined the men at the fort. Eighteen-year-old Chandler Pardee, a friend of Josiah, was waiting with the matrosses on the beach.[58]

While some persons were preparing for the fight, others were packing families and furniture for escape into interior towns. Amos Morris sent his wife and children to safety. He hid what valuables he could in a stone wall behind his home. Joseph Tuttle had yoked his oxen and put his wife and youngest six children in the cart before reporting to the fort.

No breeze cooled the defenders as they waited in the growing heat. Their excitement was no greater than Tom Painter's and his West Haven comrades' had been; but it was now several hours later, the sun was higher, and the East Haven men steamed in their own perspiration.[59]

57. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion*, p. 414.

58. Townshend, *British Invasion*, pp. 11-12; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 83; Log of the "Scorpion," PRO, ADM 51, 872, ERD/1615.

59. Townshend, *British Invasion*, pp. 11-12.

The boats, covered by fire from the "Scorpion," appeared and moved within range. The defenders would fire and retreat, as the state troops had done in West Haven. Their volley was effective. An enemy officer, Ensign Watkins of the King's Americans, fell dead in one of the boats. Then the British were on the beach, the Americans racing for cover among the rocks and brush beyond the sand.[60]

Tryon's intended route was obvious. Another Chandler brother, this time Thomas, was with the general to guide his force. But because there was only one road through this section of East Haven, no one doubted the direction Tryon would take. The British again vastly outnumbered the American defenders, and again the defenders could really do no more than harass the British in an attempt to delay them.

The first building the British encountered was the home of Amos Morris. They burned the house, outbuildings, barns, and several fields of grain, it being British policy to burn civilian residences from which rebel snipers fired. Whether the defenders did, in fact, fire out of the windows of the house will never be known. But in the excitement of the battle, the invaders convinced themselves that shooting had come from the building and so consigned it to flames.[61]

Between the point where the Morris house stood—and where it would later be reconstructed—to the small cliffs along Morris Cove, the enemy burned four more homes. Three belonged to members of the Pardee family, the fourth to John Morris, the son of Amos.[62]

From the cliffs above the harbor, Tryon directed the attack on Black Rock Fort. The fort barely slowed the British advance. Poorly designed and defended by only nineteen men and three pieces of artillery, it fell easily into enemy hands. The defenders had no chance of holding their position once the enemy controlled the high ground which surrounded the fort. After spiking their guns, they abandoned the fort. Joseph Tuttle and his son failed to reach the American position and were taken captive by the raiders.

As the two Tuttles stood guarded by British sentries, they saw that their own home was now in flames. This was the sixth house the British burned.[63]

Perhaps the father and son would have enjoyed some consolation if they could have seen their neighbors shooting with deadly effect from behind walls and

60. *Connecticut Journal*, July 7, 1779.

61. Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 88.

62. Marjorie F. Hayward, *The East Side of New Haven Harbor* (New Haven, 1938), pp. 19-23.

63. *Connecticut Journal*, July 7, 1779; Doris B. Townshend, *Townshend Heritage* (New Haven, 1971), p. 35.

trees. The defenders had two field pieces which they also used well. The guns would be fired and then hastily dragged to the rear, fired again and once more moved.

But even though the British lost men, their drive forward was irresistible. The rebels had to fall back again and again. They, too, were losing men. Jacob Thorpe of North Haven had been the first to die on that side of the harbor. The next day his friend Enos Brockett came with a wagon to fetch the body home to North Haven to his widow and his five orphans, the eldest not yet ten. There would be other new widows and orphans before the battle was over.

The defenders found themselves in more and more trouble. They lost one of their cannon. Their only hope was to retire to Beacon Hill and try to hold it. Somehow they managed to push, pull, and carry their remaining gun up the hill to a crude entrenchment that had been built earlier that day. They put the gun into action and for a few minutes slowed the British advance. But the Americans delayed them only briefly. The professional troops of Tryon refused to be stopped. They took the hill.

From Beacon Hill, the Americans retreated in many directions. Most ended up on the heights east of Fair Haven, on Saltonstall Mountain. Others retreated into the village of East Haven.

Young Chandler Pardee headed off into the fresh meadows north of Beacon Hill. While trying to escape he was shot through the lower back, the ball lodging in his chest. When the British found their victim, they assumed he had but a short time to live and so left him in the swamp. There he lay for several hours until he was found by friends who dressed his wound and removed the bullet. Pardee was later to recover fully, enlist in the Continental Army, and be taken prisoner by the British. He also survived his second ordeal with the enemy and returned to live out his life in East Haven.[64]

After the fall of Beacon Hill, the British sent a small party into the village of East Haven. This force stayed but a short time, however, fearing it might be cut off from the main body of raiders.[65]

Most of Tryon's men continued along the road toward the New Haven ferry. By now they suffered little annoyance from sniping defenders. On what is today the upper end of Townsend Avenue, they burned the home of John Woodward and then turning onto present-day Forbes Avenue also put the torch to his son's home. They marched to the ferry landing at the end of Forbes Avenue. In this area, called Waterside, they burned the homes of Jehiel Forbes, Noah Tuttle, and Elam Luddington. This made a total of eleven houses destroyed by flames.[66]

64. Sheldon B. Thorpe, *North Haven Annals* (New Haven, 1892), p. 233; Townshend, *British Invasion*, p. 8; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 85-86.

65. Sarah E. Hughes, *History of East Haven* (New Haven, 1908), pp. 250-51.

66. Townshend, *Townshend Heritage*, p. 35.

One home at Waterside was saved. This was the home of Henry Freeman Hughes, the owner and keeper of the ferry that crossed the harbor to New Haven. Two circumstances saved the Hughes house. In the first place, Hughes was from Wales, and the Welsh Royal Fusileers looked kindly on their countryman. But furthermore, Hughes's second son, Freeman, was a loyalist living in New Haven. He interceded on behalf of his father. When the British withdrew from the town, Freeman Hughes and his family accompanied them, never to see New Haven again.[67]

By now it was almost 2:00 on the afternoon of July 5. It had taken Tryon only three-and-a-half hours to march from the beach to Waterside. He controlled the east side of the harbor. Garth was in the center of New Haven. The British plan called next for Garth to move his men onto the Neck.[68]

The Americans had been pushed about almost at will by the enemy. But the defenders' numbers were growing. Farmers and merchants with muskets were arriving from Guilford, Branford, Durham, Wallingford, and Derby. The fighting was by no means over. In fact, the decisive confrontation had yet to occur.

New Haven

By the time Tryon had established control over the east shore, Garth's men were already in the "compact part" of New Haven. Exhausted by the heat and their long march, short-tempered because of the annoying rebel resistance, and eager to find some consolation in New Haven for their dreary service so far from home, these men—1200 of them—would leave their mark on the town, would leave its citizens with indelible memories of the day the enemy was in town. Yet New Haven was to suffer far less than many feared it would.

The irascibility of the enemy troops, some New Haveners believed, would be placated once their thirst was quenched with good West Indian rum. Many a refugee from town had left his personal stock in as obvious a place as possible, hoping that such a peace offering would satisfy the troops' ardor for plunder as well as for drink. Even those who remained in their homes tried to be hospitable; a little rum was a small price for saving a house full of furniture, the family silver, or possibly even their lives, they reasoned.

The strategy was hardly a complete success. It failed, for example, to save the life of Elisha Tuttle. Tuttle was deranged; he had been since the murder of his wife and daughters by Indians on the New York frontier. He attacked a party of British soldiers as the group passed his home and threatened the troops with an ancient musket which had long since been too rusty to fire. They seized him, and when he was unable to justify his actions, the soldiers beat him to the

67. Hughes, *East Haven*, pp. 247-48.

68. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion*, p. 414; Sir George Collier to Philip Stephens, July 27, 1779, PRO, ADM 1/1612, 16511.

ground and bayoneted him several times, one thrust striking him in the mouth. Lois Cook nursed the delirious man for three days before he finally died.[69]

Nathan Beers was also killed. The British accused Beers of allowing snipers to fire from the windows of his home and so shot him in the hip. The wound was painful but not serious; Isaac Beers, the old man's son, was sure he would live, and he probably would have except that later that day another band of soldiers entered the Beers home, dragged him from his bed, and beat him further. He died five days later.[70]

Women were also mistreated. Rose Luke had been with a friend when the enemy took the town. Upon returning to her own home, she found several soldiers there. One of them began to accost her, but her husband arrived in time to save her from further advances. Later these same soldiers returned and forced Mrs. Luke into the home of an old black woman who lived nearby. One soldier then carried her into one of the bedrooms "and there was attempting to do violence to my chastity but I made all possible resistance by my struggles and cries untill another person came up and saved me from his brutal fury."

Mrs. Luke reported the attack to several British officers she found lounging near her home. "I asked them if they were not ashamed to treat an old woman who had had ten children in such a manner, and they said so much the better."[71]

Christiana Gatter was less fortunate. When the troops arrived at the Gatter home, her husband fled and hid in his cornfield. Earlier in the day enemy soldiers had entered his home, "called him an old damned rebel scoundrel and booger," and beaten him insensible. Fearing a repetition of the beating, he raced for the field. This time his wife suffered. "Two of them laid hold of me and threw me on the bed, and swore if I made any noise or resistance they would kill me in a moment. I was obliged to submit," she later testified. "One of them had his will of me whilst the other kept the door, afterward the other had his will of me whilst the other kept the door."[72]

More typical of the abuse inflicted on women was that suffered by Mary Wooster, widow of General David Wooster. She was at home when a number of British soldiers entered her home and demanded silver. She protested that she had none, but they threatened to kill her unless she revealed where she had hidden it. She tried to escape but they stopped her, "laid violent hands upon her, and one of them levelled his gun at her breast, dam'ed her, and swore if she moved a step he would shoot her dead." She asked them if the British ordinarily

69. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 547-48.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 545-46; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 78-80.

71. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 551-52.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 550.

treated women so roughly. "One of them replied damn you, do you think you must wear a silk handkerchief when I have none " She then delivered her jewelry to them.[73]

Despite these instances of cruelty, most of the violence was reserved for the men of the town. Benjamin English was alone when a single British soldier entered his home and struck him with a bayonet. The seventy-four-year-old English fled out his back door, spewing blood from a wound in his chest and crying that he had been stabbed. He staggered about thirty feet toward a neighbor's home before falling dead.[74]

John Collins, a cripple, nearly suffered the same fate when he was unable to produce money for a band of plundering troops. Collins said he had none. "They damned me swore I lyed and that they would run me through if I did not tell them where it was." Despite their threats, they left Collins unharmed.[75]

Samuel Bishop lost £ 11-2-0 to British soldiers. Unfortunately, the money was not his but represented the taxes of Aaron Gilbert, who had left the money with Bishop at the direction of Jesse Ford, the local tax-collector. Bishop eventually received reimbursement from the General Assembly. The plundering soldiers' gain was the state treasury's loss.[76]

Young Elizur Goodrich, the student-soldier who had fought so bravely in West Haven had returned to town to seek treatment for a wounded leg. The wound dressed, Goodrich retired to the home of his uncle, Charles Chauncey, to rest. A British soldier discovered him in his bed and stabbed him with his bayonet. Goodrich, though severely wounded, wrestled the redcoat's gun from him and escaped to the home of Abiather Camp, a loyalist and a friend of Goodrich's father. Camp dressed the lad's second wound and offered him protection for the night.[77]

Not everyone the British encountered was murdered, raped, or stabbed. James Gilbert was captured at his home by the British, his shoes were taken, and then he was sent to the Green for water. Not bothering to dispatch a guard to accompany him, the British obviously knew they had lost their prisoner when they allowed him to leave. Troops also entered the home of Mrs. James Abraham Hillhouse, aunt of the captain of the Second Company, but declined to

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 546-47.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 550.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 546-47.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 470, 485.

77. Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 80-81.

plunder and departed the house without disturbing it. Her loyalty to King George saved her.[78]

Generally the enemy tried to avoid injury to loyal subjects or their property. In their proclamation, Tryon and Collier had promised that "whosoever shall be found and remain in peace, at his usual place of residence shall be shielded from any insult." Obviously, the troops, many of them by now drunk, had on occasion violated this pledge, but New Haveners who were loyal generally escaped harm. In several cases, Garth stationed guards to protect the property of loyalists.[79]

Among the Whig population there was more suffering. But even with this group, the British were much more likely to attack property than persons, and given the presence of 1200 invading troops—many of them mercenaries, more of them drunk—New Haven did not fare badly. Certainly, the enemy avoided wholesale looting, and attacks on private citizens were rare. Garth maintained amazing discipline considering the difficult circumstances he faced. The death of English was totally without justification, those of Beers and Tuttle only slightly more defensible. The attacks on Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Gatter were shocking but not typical. Even the damage to property was less extensive than one might expect. No public buildings or places of worship or college buildings were damaged, and except for the eleven houses burned in East Haven, burned because the British believed they were being used by snipers, the British had so far refused to use the torch on New Haven. The personal tragedies were no less real because they were rare, but they *were* rare.

While the British relaxed in town, the militia continued to assemble. General Ward had arrived late in the morning from Guilford with forty men. Ward learned of the British successes from retreating defenders he encountered in East Haven but still insisted on coming into New Haven to assess the situation there. By the time he had crossed the ferry, he found the British in complete possession of the heart of town. But Colonel Sabin was near East Rock with Colonel Thaddeus Cook of Wallingford and about 100 men. Many of them had been fighting since Hillhouse first attacked Garth's advanced guard. Other small groups of militia were on the roads to Cheshire and Derby.[80]

Although the enemy held the town's center, Ward and Sabin realized that Garth's mission was yet to be completed, for a large British force was presently

78. Myra Higgins to Mary H. Gibbs, June 6, 1861, "Myra Higgins Papers," in possession of Charles H. Vilas, Branford, Connecticut; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 62.

79. Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services."

80. Andrew Ward to Jonathan Trumbull, July 5, 1779; Jonathan Trumbull to Andrew Ward, July 7, 1779, both in "Jonathan Trumbull Papers," Connecticut State Library; Andrew Ward to Oliver Wolcott, July 6, 1779, "Oliver Wolcott Papers," Connecticut Historical Society.

headed in the direction of East Rock and the Neck Bridge. The two men guessed what this could mean. Garth probably intended to take the Neck Bridge, to use it to reach the Neck itself, and then to drive the rebels out of that area. From the Neck Garth could easily cross the Quinnipiac River by ferry to Tryon's position in East Haven or he could put his men into small boats and rejoin the fleet. Once the British had taken the Neck Bridge and destroyed it, they no longer had to fear attack by the rebels. The move to either East Haven or back to the waiting ships could be accomplished without danger.

Garth, the Americans reasoned, could not leave directly from the center of New Haven without jeopardizing his men, for his force would be subject to American attack as it prepared either to cross the harbor to East Haven or to return directly to the fleet. Furthermore, the lower ferry, which connected New Haven and East Haven, was unusable for moving large numbers of troops as long as the rebels held the Neck; they could easily bombard the ferry with artillery from that point. In fact, at the tip of the Neck was Grapevine Point, where some small earthenworks had already been constructed. As Ward and Sabin saw the situation, Garth's plan required that he take the Neck Bridge.

Amateur soldiers though they were, the American leaders had guessed correctly. Precisely how accurate their guess was they would have realized if they had seen the message Garth sent Tryon at 1:30 that afternoon. Garth complained of the rebels' having heavier cannon than his own and of the exhaustion of his men from the heat but noted that New Haven was "almost entirely deserted and therefore merits the flames." He continued: "I shall therefore, as the Bridge is secured that communicated to you, begin the conflagration and retire over it and then break it up, as we may either lay there a few hours or embark with less molestation than from any other place I have seen."[81]

Ward's analysis was correct except that he failed to reckon on British plans to burn parts of New Haven. Furthermore, Ward was unaware that Tryon and Garth had arranged for the fleet to move into the harbor at 2:00 and be ready to re-embark the troops at 4:00. Tryon had no plans to spend the night in New Haven.

As 2:00 approached the galley "Hussar" moved into the harbor, firing her eighteen pounders to silence the rebel artillery directed at her from the Neck. After thirty balls were hurled against the enemy posts, the "Hussar" waited for the embarkation to begin. The "Camilla" joined her and then several other ships and boats from the fleet moved up the harbor.[82]

81. George Garth to William Tryon, July 5, 1779, in Townshend, *British Invasion*, p. 40.

82. Logs of the "Scorpion," "Hussar" "Camilla" PRO, ADM 51, 872, ERD/1615; PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

As Tryon watched the ships begin to assemble, he received Garth's message. Believing Garth could easily take the Neck Bridge, he dispatched one Mr. Lane to inform the general that all was going according to plan, that he should begin the burning and move his men as quickly as possible to a suitable embarkation point. The commander was pleased at the smoothness of the operation. The tide would be high at about 4:00, and soon he expected to be back aboard ship. He looked forward to dinner with Garth and Collier aboard the "Camilla."[83]

Near the Neck Bridge, Ward and Sabin waited for the British troops. Their plan was the same one that had worked so well at the West Bridge. They dismantled the bridge and stationed their artillery on the high ground east of the river. The Reverend Benjamin Trumbull, pastor of the North Haven congregation, and one of his neighbors, Eliada Sanford, had actually overseen the removal of the floor from the bridge. North Haven men had provided the labor. Trumbull, who was nearly as good a soldier as he was pastor, had commanded a volunteer company for several years, and he had reaffirmed the opinions of Ward and Sabin that the British had to be stopped at the river. If the bridge was closed to them, they could not possibly get through the wide salt marshes and cross the river.

All was ready for the raiders when they arrived. The remnants of Bradley's matrosses, some Yale students, the militia, and local farmers put up such a steady fire that the British fell back. They had no chance of crossing. The fire continued, and the British, caught in the open, "retreated in great hurry & confusion."[84]

When word reached Garth of the setback, he wanted to know how else he could get his men to the Neck. There was no other route, his loyalist guide, Chandler, informed him, not unless he planned to go by boat.

Suddenly Tryon's plan had collapsed, undermined by the determined rebels who held the Neck Bridge. By the time word reached Tryon of Garth's predicament, the boats that were to have re-embarked the troops were already on their way to East Haven and the Neck. The tide was high now, and the ships lay in ample water. But soon the tide would begin to run out. The general had to decide quickly what must be done.

When the boats reached him, he decided to cross the harbor under cover of fire from the "Hussar" to New Haven and meet with Garth. He sent word to Collier asking his presence at the meeting as well. By the time the three met, the tide had already begun to turn.[85]

83. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 136.

84. Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 357; Peter Colt to Jonathan Trumbull, July 8, 1779, in "Trumbull Papers," p. 402; Simeon E. Baldwin, *Life and Letters of Simeon Baldwin* (New Haven, 1919), p. 58; Thorpe, *North Haven,* pp. 230, 245; *Connecticut Journal,* August 18, 1779.

85. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 552-53.

They considered their alternatives. There was still time to remove part of the army—but not all of it. To remove Garth's men would mean leaving Tryon's to face the growing militia alone. (The British consistently exaggerated the numbers of militia present at New Haven.) Tryon rejected the idea. Garth was equally unreceptive to the idea of his men spending the night without Tryon's force nearby.

They decided that both parties must remain. Garth and his men would spend the night on the Green in a defensive position. Tryon's troops would sleep on their arms in the heights above Black Rock Fort. In the early morning, Garth's men would cross to East Haven, and the combined force would embark from the Black Rock Fort. Before the meeting adjourned, the officers decided that Garth should burn part of New Haven before his men crossed the harbor. Tryon and Collier then returned to their posts, leaving Garth to wait out the night in town, do his burning, and then take his men to East Haven. There was no disagreement that New Haven merited the flames.

Edmund Fanning, colonel of the King's American Regiment, was possibly present at the conference. A favorite of Tryon, Fanning later claimed that he convinced the general to abandon his plan to burn the town. Fanning, who had an unexcelled reputation for cruelty during the war, made the claim as part of a bid for an honorary degree from Yale. Even if one accepts the unlikely idea that the loyalist leader did argue for leniency, his claims of having saved the town must be rejected because Tryon, Collier, and Garth agreed at the conclusion of their conference that New Haven should burn.[86]

The British troops in East Haven were thankful for a night ashore. The militia posed no great threat to them, and they had confiscated enough cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry to have as fine a feast as any of them could remember. They knew that aboard ship all that awaited them was the unsavory prospect of salted beef provided to His Majesty by a contractor distinguished only for having underbid his competition. How much more delightful to enjoy a feast from the Connecticut larder.[87]

Garth's men enjoyed no such delights. Their position was more vulnerable, and the enemy more numerous. Their day had been a long, hot one, but they dared not relax their alert. Garth enjoyed dinner with the Chandler family and several other local loyalists. He particularly liked Thomas Rice, at whose home the general had been entertained that afternoon. His men delighted in no such luxury; they were watching for surprise attack.

86. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* pp. 136 ff.; William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, "Clinton Papers"; "Kemble Papers," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1883,* XVI, 179-80.

87. Townshend, *British Invasion,* p. 14.

If Lieutenant Daniel Holbrook had had his way, the Americans would have attacked. Holbrook had been in and out of town several times and was convinced that the British were vulnerable. Many were drunk, all were exhausted, he told General Ward. He pleaded for a few men to launch the raid, but Ward refused.[88]

The general rejected Holbrook's idea because he had too few men with whom to counterattack. Colonel Edward Russell and Colonel Thaddeus Cook at the Neck Bridge had a few hundred men in their combined command, but Ward would not have a total of a thousand troops until the following day. As he reported to Governor Trumbull the next morning, the militia was partly gathered "but with that irregularity which generally attends their movements in such circumstances." The idea of a night attack was ridiculous.[89]

At one o'clock on the morning of July 6, "the enemy, unexpectedly and with utmost stillness and dispatch, called in their guards" and made ready to leave. Area loyalists learned that they must depart now if they intended to go with the troops, and the men began to move to the ferry landing. Only the 54th Regiment remained; it was the rear guard. That regiment was to stay in New Haven until all the others had crossed the lower ferry and then was to rejoin the fleet directly from the Long Wharf.[90]

Four families decided to leave New Haven with the British. Joshua Chandler had no choice but to go; his sons' service to Tryon and Garth left him no alternative. With Chandler and his family went his son-in-law Amos Botsford. Abiathar Camp and his family also left. Camp was a successful merchant from Durham. The final family to seek refuge with the enemy was that of Freeman Hughes, the son of the ferryman who would transport Garth's men to East Haven.[91]

Loyalists and troops assembled at the ferry as quickly and quietly as possible. The "Scorpion" moved up the harbor to deter any firing from the Neck onto the ferry. By daybreak the tedious process of moving the men was nearly completed.[92]

From East Haven Tryon watched to see the movement begin. He also expected to see flames as Garth's men put the torch to part of the town. In the

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 49-50.

89. Andrew Ward to Jonathan Trumbull, July 6, 1779, in "Trumbull Papers."

90. *Connecticut Journal*, July 7, 1779.

91. Franklin B. Dexter, "Notes on Some of the New Haven Loyalists," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*, IX, 37-40; Gipson, *American Loyalist*, p. 368; *Report on American Manuscripts in the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (London, 1904-1909), I, 468, 470.

92. Log of the "Scorpion," PRO, ADM 51, 872, ERD/1615.

light of the early dawn, he saw the ferry but no fires. Again his carefully laid plans had run aground, but why he did not know.

Virtually all of Garth's men had arrived in East Haven, and the 54th was ready to leave the Long Wharf when Tryon finally spied smoke. As the men of the 54th left, they burned six stores and seven vessels near the wharf. From three miles distance, President Stiles was sure the whole town was burning. Tryon's view was better. He saw that several small fires were burning, but the conflagration was nothing compared to what he had planned. He could not understand why Garth had forsaken their agreement.[93]

Garth's decision to limit the burning to the area near the wharf resulted from his desire to move his men safely out of New Haven. The general realized that his men were most exposed as they were withdrawing from town. What he hoped to do was to remove his men as surreptitiously as possible so as to catch the Americans off guard. To set fire to large areas of New Haven would only alert the Americans to the movement and subject his own men to attack. Garth was unaware that there were only a few men on the Neck. Unenthusiastic about burning civilian property and reinforced in his reluctance to burn by the Chandlers and Thomas Rice, Garth decided to spare New Haven. He knew his decision would incur Tryon's wrath, and it did, but he had no other choice. The only burning he authorized was to be done at the water's edge by the very last men to leave.[94]

As soon as Ward realized what Garth was up to, he crossed to East Haven and took direct command of the militia there. He left General Selah Hart of the Sixth Brigade of the Connecticut Militia in charge of the troops in New Haven itself.

In East Haven Ward mustered about one thousand men. These were the troops of colonels Cook, Russell, Sabin, Worthington of Saybrook, and Sage of Middletown, as well as volunteers from various parts of the state. The militia harassed the enemy as much as it could, but, as Ward reported to Trumbull, "the enemy were so advantageously posted on the heights that we could not do so much as we wished, but most of the afternoon was spent skirmishing with them till they left the shore."[95]

The departing army took with it twenty-two prisoners. Colonel Sabin was captured in East Haven and taken. So also were John Whiting, judge of probate;

93. Royal R. Hinman, *A Historical Collection of the Part Sustained by Connecticut during the War of the Revolution* (Hartford, 1842), p. 609.

94. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, "Clinton Papers"; Samuel Bostwick, *An Address to Major-General Tryon* (Hartford, 1779), pp. 8-9; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 76.

95. Andrew Ward to Jonathan Trumbull, July 7, 1779, "Trumbull Papers," p. 400.

Captain John Mix of Hamden; Isaac Townsend, who went in place of his slave Lark; and Jared Mansfield, who managed to avoid the fighting but for some unknown reason was taken prisoner.[96]

The raiders offered freedom to any black man or woman who would leave with them. None left.[97]

After burning the barracks at Black Rock Fort, the enemy made ready to depart. At 4:00 p.m. the flat-bottomed boats began receiving the soldiers. The "Hussar" covered the embarkation, firing on the advancing militia. By 7:00 all the troops were back aboard ship, and the fleet was ready to get under way.[98]

Immediately, New Haveners began to assess their losses. The following day the *Connecticut Journal* published an account of the raid and listed the number of dead at twenty-seven, the wounded at nineteen. These figures appear to be essentially correct. The twenty-two Americans taken prisoner brought the total number of casualties to sixty-two. The British left with nine men killed, forty wounded, and twenty-five missing and supposedly captured.[99]

Property destroyed during the raid was estimated to be worth £24,893-7-6 by a committee appointed by the General Assembly. Later the Assembly itself reduced this figure to £16,912-16-6. This included eleven houses, six stores, six barns, and seven vessels burned. Also, the sloop "Guilford," fitted out as a privateer, was taken by the enemy. The rest of the damage was to personal property. In fact, the vast bulk of the claims submitted to the General Assembly for reimbursement for property destroyed was for damage to personal property. The eleven houses destroyed were valued at only £4,154-9-5.[100]

The British were in no way connected with much of the destroyed or stolen. Probably at least half of the personal property that disappeared was taken by Americans. As soon as the enemy left, these thieves came rushing into the largely deserted town. They hoped that their thefts would be attributed to the British. The *Connecticut Journal* during the following weeks was full of notices

96. Edward Russell to Andrew Ward, July 10, 1779, in "Trumbull Papers"; Townshend, *Townshend Heritage,* pp. 57-58; Dexter, "New Haven Loyalists," p. 41; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," pp. 68-69, 75.

97. Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 355.

98. Selah Heart to Oliver Wolcott, July 7, 1779, "Wolcott Papers"; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* III, 95; log of the "Hussar," PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

99. *Connecticut Journal,* July 7, 1779; *Remembrancer; or, Impartial Repository of Public Events for the Year 1779* (London, 1779), pp. 364-65.

100. Jonathan Trumbull to Horatio Gates, July 10, 1779, "Gates Papers"; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 360; Townshend, *British Invasion,* pp. 19-20; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 82.

placed by persons attempting to recover their property, property that was stolen either after the enemy left or in parts of town never visited by the British. Typical was the advertisement of Samuel Russell: "Lost by the subscriber, immediately after the enemy left this town, a seal skin trunk, taken out of the house of John Sherman. . . . " Russell offered a reward for its return.[101]

The militia did much of the stealing. Militiamen were in town when it was all but empty, and some took advantage of the deserted town to enrich themselves. J.C. Ogden later offered a reward of $50 for the return of items taken from his home. "Plundered by some of the militia from the subscriber . . . " began his notice in the *Connecticut Journal*. Residents later discovered articles of furniture or clothing or dishes that had been lost at the time of the raid in the houses of neighbors, supposedly supporters of the patriot cause.[102]

The town soon recognized other problems created by the raid as well. The British—and probably the militia, too—had consumed so much rum during the raid that that vital commodity was in short supply during July and August. Several persons complained to the selectmen that some merchants were selling rum at exorbitant prices and that others refused to sell at all. The town meeting voted on August 6 to "treat with proper contempt all persons who shall refuse to sell their rum or sell the same at more than $32 per gallon by retail. . . . "[103]

At the same meeting, the town appointed a committee to examine why some residents had remained in town with the enemy. New Haven's principal defender, Phineas Bradley, chaired the committee that interviewed the persons charged to hear their reasons for fraternizing with the British. Thirty-seven of those questioned convinced the committee that they remained in town for legitimate reasons. Thirty-two others, however, were unable to satisfy the committee, but the committee considered it "their reasonable duty to recommend them to the good will and candor of the inhabitants of the town; hoping they [would] pass over in silence whatever was wrong in their conduct at the time, as it fully appears to the committee an error in judging what was best for them to do in the hurry and confusion they were in, rather than from any design or predetermination to tarry in town, and submit and put themselves under the protection of the enemies of the United States of America." Eight others refused to appear and were judged in contempt of the authority of the town.[104]

101. *Connecticut Journal,* July 7, August 4 and 11, and December 1, 1779; Gipson, *American Loyalist,* p. 370; Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 91.

102. *Connecticut Journal,* November 3, 1779.

103. New Haven Town Records, V, 96.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

In addition to those persons who remained in town with the enemy, the town meeting was also eager to know why some militiamen from outlying parishes of New Haven refused "to appear and oppose the enemy and to defend the town in the late invasion. . . . " The commissioned officers of the militia were ordered to question these persons to "know their reasons for their neglect. . . . "[105]

The militia's record was hardly one of unmitigated glory at New Haven. Some members had never answered the alarm. Others had answered but, according to Ezra Stiles, Jr., "remained idle the terrifyd spectators at some distance from us affording us no assistance tho we engaged four times our number. . . . " Aaron Burr was equally critical. Still others of the militia used the raid as an occasion to steal from their neighbors.

And if the Americans were not all heroes, neither were the British all scoundrels. They had committed few acts of unprovoked violence. The raiders were in general well disciplined. Benjamin English was murdered without provocation; Christiana Gatter was raped; property was stolen and destroyed. But the scene produced by the raiding force of 2,400 men, men who supposedly represented the dregs of British society and men who were foreign mercenaries, could have been much worse. In fact, probably the British needed to feel no more shame for the behavior of some of their men than the Americans did for those who robbed and plundered their own neighbors.

But for every vandal and for every thief among the defenders, there were men like Ward, Cook, Sabin, Bradley, Mix, and Gilbert who fought hard and well to defend their own and their neighbors' homes. Ultimately, by foiling Garth's attempt to cross the Neck Bridge, by forcing him to spend a sleepless night in town, and by frightening him into believing he had to sneak out of town, these men saved New Haven from the torch. When George Washington wrote that "the conduct of the militia at New Haven does them the highest honor," he was talking of these men, not those we would rather forget.[106]

Fairfield

The British left New Haven at 7:00 on the evening of July 6. Where the raiders were headed only they knew for certain. But from bits of information dropped by the enemy and from the direction taken by the departing ships, most New Haveners believed that Fairfield was Tryon's next target.[107]

105. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

106. Ezra Stiles, Jr. to David MacClure, August 24, 1779, Stiles Papers; Aaron Burr to (?), February 5, 1833, Marietta College Library; George Washington to Samuel H. Parsons, July 10, 1779, in George Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

107. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; Jonathan Trumbull to Oliver Wolcott, July 9, 1779, in "Wolcott Papers."

Fairfield was an even more unlikely spot for a raid than New Haven. It was a prosperous agricultural town of 150 houses built principally along one street, the Post Road which connected New York and Boston, and around a picturesque green, at whose center stood the courthouse of Fairfield County flanked on one side by a new schoolhouse and on the other by a jail and the jailer's home. Across the Post Road was the Congregational meetinghouse and to the west of the Green and literally in the road was the Anglican Church.[108]

A mile-and-a-half east of the Green was Black Rock Harbor, one of Connecticut's finest harbors, separated from the town by Ash Creek and the salt marshes surrounding it. Two miles west of the Green, the Mill River flowed into the Sound. At its mouth was the small community of Southport, then made up of only a dozen houses and so too small to be a separate parish of the town. The outlying parishes were Greenfield Hill, located four miles northwest of the Fairfield Green; Greens Farms, five miles down the coast; and Norfield, five miles beyond Greenfield Hill.

Timothy Dwight, later to succeed Ezra Stiles as president of Yale, would preach for several years at Greenfield Hill. From the meetinghouse there he could look down over Fairfield, itself built on a plain but enclosed on three sides by hills. The town's beauty suggested to Dwight a poem that he eventually called "Greenfield Hill":

> Heavens, what a matchless group of beauties rare
> Southward expands! where crown'd with yon tall oak,
> Round-hill the circling land and sea o'erlooks;
> Or, smoothly sloping, Grover's beautious rise,
> Spreads its green sides, and lifts its single tree
> . . . . . .
> In clear, full view, with every varied charm
> That forms the finish'd landscape, blending soft
> In matchless union, Fairfield and Greens Farms
> Give lustre to the day.[109]

Although a far less important town, Fairfield had attended to its defenses much more carefully than had New Haven. Early in 1776, at the request of the selectmen, the Connecticut Council of Safety had ordered that twenty-five men be raised in Fairfield to make improvements on the ancient fort that guarded Black Rock Harbor. Coincidentally bearing the same name as the fort that

108. Brown, *Loyalist Operations.* Detailed maps of Fairfield at the time of the Revolution may be found at the Fairfield Historical Society.

109. Vernon Louis Parrington, ed., *The Connecticut Wits* (New York, 1969), p. 193.

pretended to protect the New Haven Harbor, Black Rock Fort in Fairfield was built on Grover's Hill, protected on one side by Ash Creek and on the other by the deep water of the harbor. For an enemy to capture the fort from behind would require a march of several miles up the Post Road to the Upper Bridge, nearly into Stratfield (now called Bridgeport) and then a march of several miles down the Black Rock peninsula to the fort. To capture the fort by sea would require a large fleet to bombard the fort while a landing force attempted to fight its way up the steep sides of Grover's Hill. The only similarity between the fort in Fairfield and the one in New Haven was name. Fairfield's would prove its usefulness as surely as the one at New Haven had demonstrated its poor design.

Lieutenant Jonathan Mills directed the reconstruction at Black Rock Fort. In August, 1776, he installed cannon—double-fortified twelve-pounders. Twenty state troops manned these guns, supplemented each night by twenty-six guards paid by the town.[110]

During the early spring of 1778, the town approved additional measures of defense. It made some minor modifications to the fort on Grover's Hill, constructed a barracks there, and increased the size of the town guard to forty-two men, who patrolled McKenzie's Point, Frost Point, and Compo. If the enemy struck, the town guard would summon the militia and alert the men at the fort.[111]

The General Assembly in January, 1778, ordered the stationing of fifty matrosses at Fairfield, and shortly thereafter the Council authorized still further improvements in the Black Rock Fort. To complete these improvements, the Council voted to provide "20 sticks timber 8 feet long, 10 inches square, 48 plank 2½ inches thick, 4 pick-axes, 8 spades, 3 or 4 narrow axes, 3 or 4 common hoes, a large quantity of deck nails, 300 double tens or ten d. nails, 3 or 4 common joiners hammers." Unfortunately, the Council failed to record what was to be done with these materials, but by July, 1779, the fort was ready to meet any raiding force the British were likely to send against it. The rest of Fairfield's coastline was patrolled by a company of thirty guards, directed and paid by the selectmen.[112]

Fairfield's defenses were by no means impenetrable, but the town probably was as well prepared for attack as any along the coast. Soon it would have the chance to test its effectiveness.

110. Trumbull and Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut,* XV, 241, 460, 496; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* I, 117, 162.

111. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 88; entries of October 31, 1776, and February 28, 1778, Fairfield Town Minutes, Fairfield Historical Society.

112. Entries of May 17, 1779, Fairfield Town Minutes; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* I, 478; II, 219.

Light breezes brought the British fleet from New Haven to Fairfield. The town guard first sighted the ships shortly before 4:00 on the morning of the seventh. Isaac Jarvis, then commanding the fort, ordered an alarm gun fired. New Haven's experience guaranteed that Fairfield would take the threat of attack seriously. Families began to pack their valuables; women and children prepared to vanish into the hinterlands; the militia began to assemble.

But the fleet gave no sign of dropping anchor. It appeared to be returning to New York. As Fairfield pondered the ships' movements and its own fate, a heavy fog began to roll in from the Sound. Soon the ships disappeared in the heavy mist, their objective still a mystery.

In Fairfield many continued to prepare for attack. Young William Wheeler, not yet seventeen, helped his father drive their livestock to Toilsome Hill, where the animals would be safe. Mary Fish Silliman, pregnant as she was, fled her home on Holland Hill and west to North Stratford, now Trumbull; there she would give birth to a son, Benjamin, one of the fathers of American science. Prudent Phillis made her living as a wash-woman; as careful as her name suggested, she hid her laundry in a thicket where she hoped it would escape the plundering hands of any raiders. Watchmaker Isaac Burr climbed down his well to hide his customers' watches in its stone walls.[113]

Stories of the New Haven raid had already prompted Priscilla Burr to ask a friend in Norfield (now Weston) to bring his team to town and to help her remove her possessions. The friend arrived Tuesday night, spent the night, and when the alarm sounded began loading his wagon with all it could carry. Leaving her servants to hide whatever else they could, Mrs. Burr headed off to Norfield to the home of Parson Samuel Sherwood, Jr. By the time she arrived, the Sherwood home was full of refugees from Fairfield and Greens Farms.[114]

Mrs. Burr was still loading her clothes into the wagon when the fog cleared. It was then about ten in the morning. To the horror of the people of Fairfield, the fleet had anchored and was lazily riding close off McKenzie's Point.

All the rest of the morning and into the afternoon, the ships showed no sign of action. The day was warm and humid but less oppressive than the two previous days, for a breeze had picked up and relieved both the apparently inactive men on the ships and the frantic people in Fairfield.

At 3:00 p.m., the fleet came to life, summoned by a signal from the "Camilla." Sailors began lowering flat boats, and troops began assembling on the decks of the transports. The first men into the boats were the flank companies of the

113. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Elizabeth Hubbell Schenck, *The History of Fairfield,* II, 391; entries of July 7, 1779, "William Wheeler Journal," Connecticut State Library; Duane H. Hurd, comp., *History of Fairfield County* (Philadelphia, 1881), pp. 281-82.

114. Priscilla Burr to Helen Lothrop, August 10, 1779, *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society,* VIII, 2-3.

Guards, part of the Landgraf Regiment and the King's American Regiment. Then came artillerymen with two field pieces, and finally General Tryon himself.

By 3:30 the loaded boats were moving toward the beach, and by 4:00 the troops were ashore at a spot called the Pines. Their landing was unopposed. Guided by George Hoyt, brother of Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley of Fairfield, Tryon took his men east along the beach until he came to the Fairfield Beach Road.[115]

Isaac Jarvis was at Black Rock Fort with twenty-six men and his double fortified twelve-pounders. Tryon posed no threat to him because Ash Creek separated the fort from the route of the enemy's march. But if Tryon continued along the Fairfield Beach Road, he would shortly be within range of the fort's guns.

Jarvis had only a few minutes to wait before giving the order to fire. The British had barely turned off the beach and toward town when the shooting from the fort commenced. It was both grape and ball. Simultaneously the town guards and militia began firing from behind the stone walls along the road.

For a moment the British hesitated. Then Tryon ordered the Guards forward, while the "Hussar" and the British gunboats concentrated their attack on the fort. The militia fell back, Jarvis turned part of his fire onto the navy, and Tryon's men easily marched into Fairfield.[116]

Once in town, the troops assembled on the Green between the meetinghouse and the courthouse. Tryon took over the home of Benjamin Bulkley and made it his headquarters. In less than an hour, the enemy had established itself in town.

Now Tryon waited for the arrival of Garth. His division had had to remain aboard ship until the boats that had landed the first elements returned. It would be early evening before Garth and the remaining men had landed a mile west of McKenzie's Point and had made the long march over Sasco Hill into town. But Tryon was in no hurry; there was plenty to be done before they arrived.[117]

The militia had fallen back to Round Hill. There Colonel Samuel Whiting prepared his men to deny Tryon further penetration of the countryside and quickly organized a small counterattack. Captain Thomas Nash took thirty men to the woods behind the meetinghouse and fired at the British force, reloaded, fired again, and retreated back to Round Hill. This failed to frighten the British, and Nash lost one of his own men in the process.[118]

115. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15; Samuel Whiting to Jonathan Trumbull, July 8, 1779, "Wolcott Papers"; log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* I, 393.

116. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15.

117. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15.

118. Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 390.

Whiting was more successful in preventing Tryon from taking Round Hill and from raiding Stratfield and attacking Black Rock Fort from the rear. Holding his main force at Round Hill, the colonel ordered part of his men to the Upper Bridge, the structure that crossed Ash Creek just before the Post Road entered Stratfield, there to take up the bridge and to place field pieces beyond the bridge. He hoped these few men could keep the British on the west side of the creek.

While he awaited Garth's arrival, Tryon probed the American position on Round Hill and also sent a party to capture the Upper Bridge. The British found that the Americans on Round Hill begrudged them even the smallest part of the hill and that the militiamen at the Upper Bridge refused to allow them to cross. The battle at the bridge was a repeat of the encounters at West Bridge and Neck Bridge in New Haven.

Tryon was triply frustrated: he had failed to penetrate the hills beyond the Green in Fairfield; he had failed to bully his way into Stratfield and from there into Stratford; and, therefore, he was unable to strike at Black Rock Fort from the rear. His failure to take Round Hill was only a bother. His failure to get across the Upper Bridge meant he had to readjust his plans.

He had intended, once Garth joined him, to march up the Post Road to Stratfield and Stratford. Having raided these communities, he would then return to Black Rock Peninsula, strike the fort there from the rear, and reembark his men from Black Rock Harbor. The general, all too well aware of his miscarried schemes both here and at New Haven, fumed as he waited for Garth. If only the damned rebels would leave their bridges in place!

While Tryon smoldered, the militia from surrounding towns began to assemble. Thaddeus Cook and Edward Russell brought their regiments from New Haven. The Fairfield County units that had served during the first raid had already begun to return to protect their own homes. Even though Governor Trumbull would not learn of the raid and dispatch state troops to Fairfield until the eighth, Tryon was already beginning to face a larger force here than he had seen at New Haven. Even red-haired Ezra Stiles, Jr., was here with his contingent of Yale students.[119]

Unable to move on to Stratfield, Tryon established outposts around the center of Fairfield. When Garth arrived, the generals made ready to spend the night in town. By this time the town was generally empty of inhabitants except for a

119. Entry of July 7, 1779, "Wheeler Journal"; Frank Landon Humphreys, *Life and Times of David Humphreys* (New York, 1917), I, 130; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London newspaper), August 4, 1779; Jonathan Trumbull to Oliver Wolcott, July 8, 1779, "Wolcott Papers;" Jonathan Trumbull to Andrew Ward, July 8, 1779, in "Trumbull Papers"; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 356; Ezra Stiles, Jr., to David MacClure, August 24, 1779, "Stiles Papers."

few women who remained behind, confident, or so they claimed, of British civility.[120]

What these women failed to take into account was that the men who had raided their town were not all gentlemen respectful of the rights of persons and property. Many of the British left their manners at home, and German mercenaries and American loyalists were even less restrained. Whatever the nationality of those men who delighted in tormenting civilians, those Americans who remained in town came to wish they had not.

Priscilla Burr's sister had been caught in town. Soldiers invaded her home and went to her bedroom, where they tore down her curtains, broke her dressing glass, and demolished her bureau. They then robbed her of her shoe buckles and buttons. Lucretia Radfield fared even worse. Soldiers destroyed her furniture, she later explained, "and attempted, with threats and promises, to prevail upon me to yield to their unchaste and unlawful desires." When she "obstinately denied them my body, these men then and there dragged me to the bed and attempted violence, but thanks to God there appeared that instant to come two persons who rescued me. . . ."[121]

But so long as Tryon and Garth themselves remained in town, the occupation was no scene of unmitigated horror. One Mrs. Beardsley was pregnant at the time of the raid, and while the enemy was in town she went into labor. "All the officers appeared disposed to treat her, and her assistance with decency," wrote Ruana Robertson, who spent much of the night with the Beardsley woman. Abigail Bulkley, wife of Josiah, said that she was well treated by the soldiers "and by the aid and assistance of one of them, I saved my house, and some trifle of furniture from flames." When Tryon learned that Eunice Burr, whose husband Thaddeus was prominent in town affairs, had been mistreated by his soldiers, he, quoting Mrs. Burr, "was kind enough to order two centrys [*sic*] at the house, which caused me a more quiet night than I feared. . . ."[122]

In terms of individuals' being abused, Fairfield suffered less than had New Haven. No women were raped; there were no unprovoked murders. But if the people themselves managed to avoid harm, their property did not. Shortly after Garth joined him, Tryon ordered that some houses in Fairfield be burned. Tryon never planned to ignite the whole town, as he had never planned to burn all of New Haven. He did, however, intend to burn enough to convince Connecticut to reunite with the mother country.

120. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 391.

121. Priscilla Burr to Helen Lothrop, August 10, 1779, in *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society,* VIII, 3-4; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 558-59.

122. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 554, 555-58, 559-60.

The fires began about an hour before sunset. The house of Isaac Jennings was the first to burn, then the home of Elijah Abel. Others followed. The Americans on Grover's Hill would initially see flames through a building's windows; then, after the fire burned inside for several minutes, the building itself would explode into fire.[123]

All night the fires burned. As they did, a thunderstorm spread over the town. The flashes of lightning seemed to combine with the flames, and the thunder seemed to combine with the sound of cannon to make one believe, thought Timothy Dwight, "that the final day had arrived, and that, amid this funereal darkness, the morning would speedily dawn to which no night would ever succeed, the graves yield up their inhabitants, and the trial commence at which was to be finally settled the destiny of man."[124]

The burning actually came in stages. After only a few houses had been put to the torch, Tryon sent a message to Colonel Whiting of the militia. The Reverend John Sayre, an Anglican clergyman stationed in Fairfield by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, delivered the dispatch. It consisted of the general's proclamation which stated that anyone who remained peaceably at his home would escape injury to himself and his property.

Whiting's reply was short. He wrote it from Round Hill as he watched the homes of several neighbors burn. "Connecticut having nobly dared to take up arms against the cruel despotism of Britain," he said, "and as the flames, have now preceded the answer to your flag, they will persist to oppose to their utmost, that power exerted against injured innocence." Roughly eloquent, Whiting's answer made it clear that the Americans were not about to lay down their arms regardless of the fate of their town.[125]

Tryon ordered several more houses burned. Still his intention was not to destroy the entire town; but because his men had been fired upon from some of the houses and because Whiting had rejected the terms of his proclamation, Tryon felt justified in making Fairfield suffer.

Both Tryon and Garth provided protections for many houses. The Reverend Sayre asked Tryon to spare the rest of the village. This the general refused but granted protections to Sayre for his own and Andrew Eliot's homes, Eliot being Sayre's Congregational counterpart. Tryon also placed sentries at the two houses of worship in town and at the homes of Thaddeus Burr and several of his

123. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 391; entries of July 7, 1779, "Wheeler Journal."

124. Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (Cambridge, 1969), III, 361.

125. Samuel Whiting to William Tryon, July 7, 1779, "Gates Papers"; Rainier, *A Detail of Some Particular Services.*

neighbors. General Garth, according to Pastor Eliot, "treated the inhabitants with as much humanity as his errand would admit." In one instance, an officer encouraged one Fairfield resident, Mary Beers, to attempt to "put the fire out of your house" and even provided a guard for her so that other soldiers might not impede her efforts. At sunrise much of the town still remained untouched.[126]

Irregular fighting lasted throughout the night, Americans sniping at the enemy whenever the chance arose. The biggest battle of the raid came just before sunrise. Anticipating the withdrawal of his troops by the route he had taken into town, Tryon sent word to the fleet to silence the guns of Black Rock Fort to prevent their firing onto the withdrawing men. The "Hussar" began bombarding the fort about 4:00 a.m. The galley fired seventy-five blasts at the fort. Jarvis and his men responded with their own guns, also hurling taunts at the ships through a speaking trumpet. The duel, both real and verbal, lasted until nearly 7:00. When it was over, Black Rock Fort still dominated the harbor and that part of the beach where Tryon planned to embark.[127]

As the "Hussar" abandoned its attack on the fort, Tryon ordered a change in plans. Instead of returning to the ships by the Fairfield Beach Road, the raiders would march to the point where Garth had landed and board the small boats there. This would avoid the guns of Jarvis and his men. The withdrawal began at 8:00 a.m., and the soldiers were relieved to be departing, as they had been "in a great panic thro' the night, and exceedingly afraid the rebels as they called us would be upon them in the morning early." By this time a large body of militia had collected, and, as Whiting reported, "harrass'd them very much at their embarkation, till afternoon when they all got on board. . . ."[128]

The Jaegers covered the British withdrawal. "The rear guard, consisting of a banditti the vilest that was ever let loose among men, set fire to everything which General Tryon left," stated Andrew Eliot to his brother John. These men mistreated all they encountered, making no distinction between loyalist or rebel. They dragged one woman "about by the hair of her head, tore her cloaths of [*sic*] and swore they would kill her." Joseph Gold was on his way to get water when a soldier ordered him to stop. Gold refused, and the soldier shot and killed him. An old black man, the servant of Jonathan Lewis, was bedridden at the time. The raiders entered his house after some militia had fired from his windows. Unwilling to believe the man's denials of involvement, the soldiers bayonetted him to death. A similar fate befell Solomon Sturgis, an Irish immigrant who worked for Samuel Penfield.[129]

126. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 392; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 553-54.

127. Log of the "Hussar," PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; entries of July 8, 1779, "Wheeler Journal"; *Connecticut Gazette,* August 4, 1779.

128. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 392-93; Samuel Whiting to Jonathan Trumbull, July 9, 1779, "Trumbull Papers," p. 405.

The Jaegers ignited as much as possible of the town that remained. They burned Parson Eliot's, Rev. Sayre's and Thaddeus Burr's homes, and even the two churches in town. Mrs. Burr stated that she "told them that I had General Tryon's protection in writing; upon which they damned the general and protection too and tore it from me. While a number went into the house to set fire to it," she continued, "two or three others came to search me, they took my pocket book and buttons which till then I had preserved." Jane Bulkley had a protection from General Garth, and the general had also stationed a guard to protect her home. The guard left when the withdrawal began and, as she stated, "then my house was plundered and attempted to be burnt."[130]

This rear-guard of German mercenaries was responsible for much of the destruction of Fairfield. Their work and the burning done by Thomas Chapman, formerly of Stratford but then a captain in Fanning's regiment, and the winds that quickly spread the fires, caused most of the total damage to the town. Tryon and Garth never ordered as many buildings burned as were.[131]

Their vengeance satisfied, the Jaegers departed, "persued [*sic*] through the burning houses by the enraged inhabitants. . . ." Collier had to order gunboats to drive the militiamen back from the beach.[132]

With the raiders went John Sayre. Long an outspoken advocate of the loyalist cause, Sayre felt that he would no longer be safe in Fairfield after the raid. His wife and their eight children went with him.[133]

The British also took several prisoners. Joshua Beers was captured by Hessian troops and Jonathan Bulkley by British. Bulkley's brother-in-law, George Hoyt, had been Tryon's guide. Pastor Eliot mentioned that others were also removed but, he said, "no person of distinction." Thus, their names are lost to history.[134]

129. Entries of July 7, 1779, "Wheeler Journal"; Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 392; Priscilla Burr to Helen Lothrop, August 10, 1779, in *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society,* VIII, 3-4.

130. *Connecticut Gazette,* August 4, 1779; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 555-58.

131. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, in Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 392; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 558.

132. Entries of July 8, 1779, "Wheeler Journal."

133. Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* II, 396.

134. Andrew Eliot to John Eliot, July 15, 1779, *ibid.*, p. 392; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 492, 560; *Connecticut Gazette,* August 4, 1779.

David Beers was also among the prisoners. The enemy had captured him the previous day and marched him to the point of embarkation. Reuben Beers, his brother, explained how David avoided being taken to New York: "by the intreat and request of David Beers aforenam'd on application to Genl. Tryon, and his own request and information that he had a large family of small children and wife, that he supposed his house and property was destroyed, the genl. at the place of embarkation released him." Clearly, Tryon was not a man devoid of compassion.[135]

By noon the troops were aboard ship, and at 2:00 the fleet got under way. Where it was headed, the Americans did not know. Some suspected Norwalk, others New London. In fact, the fleet sailed only a few miles down the coast to Greens Farms. There a small party of raiders burned fourteen houses, twelve barns, and a meetinghouse and quickly withdrew.[136]

Colonel Whiting was too busy in Fairfield to be worrying about where Tryon might be headed. Shortly after the enemy departed, he received an urgent call for protection from Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley. Captain Jonathan Sturges, commander of a militia company, had brought a cannon to her home and threatened to blow her and the house to pieces. He and many other Fairfield people believed she was in part responsible for the town's suffering. Her brother had escorted Tryon to town and her husband, they mistakenly believed, had voluntarily gone with the fleet. When Whiting arrived at her home, he found 150 irate men ready to support Sturges. The colonel was as direct as he had been in his reply to Tryon. Disperse or be arrested, he ordered. The crowd left.[137]

Whiting reported that nine or ten Americans died during the Fairfield raid. He made no attempt to estimate the number of wounded or missing; they were few. The enemy lost nine killed, thirty wounded, and five missing.[138]

Property damage was much greater at Fairfield than it had been at New Haven. Fire destroyed eighty-three houses, fifty-four barns, forty-seven shops and stores, two schools, two churches, the jail, and the courthouse. The Council of Safety appointed Thaddeus Burr and the Assembly designated John Chandler, Daniel Bennet, and William Hawley to estimate the amount of losses suffered at Fairfield. While town officials put the damage at £34,359:5:6, the

135. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 554.

136. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; Henry Barton Dawson, *Battles of the United States* (New York, 1858), I, 510-11.

137. Schenck, *History of Fairfield,* I, 394.

138. Samuel Whiting to Oliver Wolcott, July 9, 1779, "Wolcott Papers"; entries of July 9, 1779, "Wheeler Journal"; *Remembrancer,* pp. 364-65.

General Assembly finally agreed that £23,893:12:8 was a more reasonable figure. This included the damage done at Greens Farms.[139]

The Council commissioned Burr to transmit to the governor "particular and well authenticated accounts under oath as may be of the barbarities and cruelties occasioned and executed by the enemy in their late incursions and ravages in said town." Despite Burr's best efforts, he found few instances of "barbarities and cruelties," aside from those committed by the Jaegers. If anything, Tryon's men—with the obvious exceptions of these mercenaries and Fanning's partisans—were better behaved in Fairfield than they had been at New Haven. Had the general had his way, most of Fairfield would have escaped the torch. But Fairfield still put a price on his head, voting in town meeting on July 20, twelve days after the raid, "to put about subscriptions to raise a sum of money, as a reward for any person or persons that shall captivate or take prisoner General William Tryon, who commanded the British troops when they burnt this town. . . ."[140]

Norwalk

After the raids at Fairfield and Greens Farms, the British fleet returned to Huntington Bay, Long Island, there to receive fresh supplies, to make repairs of ships and equipment, and to fumigate the transports.[141]

Connecticut waited to see where Tryon would strike next. Governor Trumbull was positive that New London would be the raiders' target, but General Oliver Wolcott suspected that the blow would fall on Norwalk. The general sent half the militia under his command to that town. General Samuel H. Parsons of the Continental Army agreed with Wolcott. Parsons was in Redding, Connecticut, sent there by Washington to assess the situation in that state and to take charge of the militia in case of further raids. On July 9, Parsons informed his commander that he was going to Norwalk and also sent an urgent appeal to General John Glover of the Continental Army to bring his brigade, then camped in New London, to western Connecticut.[142]

139. Connecticut Archives, Revolutionary War, Series One, XV, 250, Connecticut State Library; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 373; Hinman, *Historical Collection,* p. 627.

140. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 373; entries of July 20, 1779, Fairfield Town Minutes.

141. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

142. Jonathan Trumbull to Oliver Wolcott, July 9, 1779, and Oliver Wolcott to Selah Hart, July 9, 1779, "Wolcott Papers"; Samuel H. Parsons to John Glover, July 10, 1779, "Gates Papers"; Samuel H. Parsons to George Washington, July 9, 1779, in Samuel Prescott Hildreth, *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of the Early Pioneer Settlers of Ohio* (Cincinnati, 1852), p. 537.

Neither Parsons nor Wolcott could really have known where Tryon would attack, because the general's plans were still in flux. His original design was to raid New London before returning to New York. But he had had to modify his plans before, and he would have to do so again. Because the wind did not favor a journey down the Sound to New London, Tryon had to postpone his scheme for that town. Instead of idly waiting for a change in the wind, he decided to attack Norwalk, a town whose bothersome privateers had long been a hindrance to loyalist shipping on the Sound. On Saturday, July 10 at 2:00 p.m., the fleet abandoned Huntington Bay and began the short trip to Norwalk.[143]

At five that afternoon it anchored outside the Norwalk Islands, about five miles from the landing at South Norwalk, then called Old Well after the spring that had once supplied fresh water to area ships destined for the West Indies. Almost immediately the troops began climbing into small boats to begin the long row to shore. Simultaneously the "Hussar" sailed into the Norwalk River to cover the landing of the troops and to destroy whatever shipping it found there.[144]

Local farmers had been at work all day harvesting their crops in fields just behind the beach. The fleet's arrival sent them hurrying back to town. Thomas Benedict was fourteen at the time. He and his father quit the harvest and raced home to gather up what belongings they could and then to drive their reluctant oxen to the home of Thomas St. John at Belden's Hill, where they thought they would be safe.[145]

Some Norwalk families had anticipated the raid; after all, Greens Farms was close enough to convince them that they might be the next to suffer. Samson Means began to move his family and his valuables as soon as he heard of the burning of Greens Farms. Because of the difficulty of hiring a team and because, as an orthodox Jew, he refused to violate the Sabbath, he had to leave much of his property behind when he fled Norwalk. The only shelter he could find for his family was in a "room of about 12 feet square [which] contain'd between 20 & 30 persons, old & young. . . . "[146]

143. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, and Sir George Collier to Sir Henry Clinton, June 5, 1779, "Clinton Papers"; log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

144. John R. Cuneo, "The British Invasion of Norwalk," *Norwalk Hour,* August 7, 1951; log of the "Hussar," PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615.

145. Jane H. Plumley, "Mrs. Mary St. John Tells About Burning Norwalk," *Norwalk Hour,* August 7, 1951; Edwin Hall, *The Ancient Historical Records of Norwalk* (New York, 1847), p. 175.

146. Samson Means to Aaron Lopez, July 30, 1779, "Aaron Lopez Papers," Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island.

William and Mary St. John lived just south of the Common. News of the British fleet sent them gathering up what household articles they could carry and heading out in the general direction of the Rocks, an area north of town. They took their livestock with them and also a bed. As soon as they felt they were out of harm's way, they tethered their stock, drank fresh milk from their own cows, and slept as best they could in the bed they set up in the woods.[147]

When Nathaniel Raymond heard that the British had arrived, he left his home in Old Well with all the family's valuables. These he hid in a nearby swamp and drove his parents and their furniture to safety.[148]

Never had Norwalk seen such turmoil. The chaos that had earlier visited New Haven and Fairfield was being repeated here. Until now Norwalk had been largely untouched by the war. Lying along both sides of the Norwalk River, the town was built on a series of hills, those near the Sound rising gently from the shore, while the hills behind town were steep and abrupt. Scattered among these hills were the farms of the townspeople, Norwalk being essentially an agricultural community.

At a point where the Norwalk River narrowed, a bridge connected the two parts of town, Norwalk itself, and Old Well. Just to the east of the bridge was the center of Norwalk. The dirt road that led from the bridge passed between the town house, where all official town functions were held, and the old burying ground on the south and the elegant homes of Thomas Belden, Ebenezer Street, and James Rogers on the north.

At the end of this road was the Common, just north of which stood the Anglican church, whose rector, Jeremiah Leaming, was a staunch defender of George III and the loyalist cause. John Betts operated a tavern across the street from the church. Farther south on the same thoroughfare, which eventually led to the Sound at a public paddock called Calf Pasture, was the Congregational meetinghouse. Almost directly opposite the meetinghouse was Grummond Hill, a prominence that Tryon would use as an observation point.

Old Well was two miles down the road (now called West Avenue) that began at the west end of the bridge. It was a small community of two dozen or so homes, one that depended for almost all its needs on the larger settlement at the center of Norwalk.[149]

Despite its vulnerability to enemy raids, neither state nor town officials had bothered with the defense of Norwalk. In October, 1776, the General Assembly had resolved to station a few militia as guards for the town and during the following month sent six six-pounders with powder and ball to town. These

147. Hall, *Records of Norwalk,* pp. 179-80.

148. *Ibid.,* p. 178.

149. John Warner Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections* (Hartford, 1836), pp. 390-91.

guns were manned by local citizens, in all probability men with no special competence in the use of such weapons.[150]

The state's lack of concern finally forced the selectmen in March, 1777, to hire seventy-five men as a town watch, but the town remained obviously exposed to attack until January, 1778, when the General Assembly established a company of twenty-four artillerymen to serve for one year at Norwalk. These men were commanded by Lieutenant William Seymour. The company apparently convinced state leaders that it was sufficient to defend Norwalk, because the following year the Assembly refused to increase its size. Ebenezer Whitney did, however, replace Seymour as the commanding officer. During the spring of 1779, the Council of Safety created a company of guards to serve in conjunction with the artillerymen. These two units together with the local militia constituted Norwalk's only defense until Parsons and his Continental troops and Wolcott and his militiamen arrived at just about the same time that the British troops began loading into the longboats.[151]

Both raiders and defenders arrived on the evening of July 10. Because of the long row from the ships to the shore, Tryon's force finally reached the beach only after the sun had already set. The general had with him the Fifty-fourth, the Landgraf Regiment, and the Jaegers. These contingents landed at Calf Pasture. The boats then hastened back to the transports and returned to shore again at about 3:00 the next morning with Fanning's regiment of loyalists.[152]

The men rested as best they could until just before dawn, when they began the march of two miles into the center of Norwalk. The Fifty-fourth led the column, followed by the two German regiments, and Fanning's men brought up the rear. The enemy met no resistance until it reached Grummond Hill. There fifty Continental troops and a few militiamen, all under the command of Captain Stephen Betts, tried to halt the British advance. The task was hopeless; the British refused even to be delayed, took the hill, and put the Americans to flight.[153]

During the fighting, John Waters, a Continental soldier, fell into enemy hands. Despite his surrender, the British advanced guard stabbed him with a bayonet and shot him in the arm. Waters, convinced that he was safer trying to

150. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* I, 42, 75.

151 Entries of March 12, 1777, Norwalk Town Records, Lockwood House, Norwalk; Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* I, 478, 519; II, 124, 181, 213, 218, 233, 282.

152. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15.

153. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, "Clinton Papers."

escape than depending on his captors' mercy, bolted from his guards and managed to struggle back to American lines.[154]

By 5:00 that morning the Fifty-fourth had cleared the center of town of rebel defenders, and Tryon took over control of the area. Now he relaxed to wait for Garth, who was to attack Old Well and proceed into the center of town from the west. Meanwhile, the rebels had retreated to the hills north of town, there to meet Tryon's next advance.

Because the fleet was anchored so far from shore, Garth did not land his force until about 7:00, nearly two hours after Tryon had taken the center of town. With Garth were the flank companies of the Guards and the two fusileer regiments. Once ashore these units immediately set out to join Tryon's men.[155]

At Flax Hill, Garth encountered some light resistance, part of which was furnished by Nathaniel Raymond and fourteen other irregulars from Old Well. The British chased the nuisances away and marched on toward their rendezvous in town. Before 9:00 that morning the two commands had joined forces.[156]

Tryon's immediate concern was to drive the rebels out of the northern hills. From those hills, they had been able to lob occasional fire down onto the occupying force. He ordered Garth to move the Seventh Regiment and the Light Infantry against the rebel positions. Tryon himself retired to Grummond Hill to watch the fight.

The rebel defenders numbered about eleven or twelve hundred men: one hundred and fifty Continental troops under Parsons and about one thousand militia under Wolcott. They also had two cannon which they had been using to good effect. The defenders were well placed, situated as they were in the steep hills known as the Rocks.

Initially, the British were able to push the American force back, but then "they were checked in their progress by the vigorous exertions of the parties of militia and continental troops sent out to oppose them, and in turn were compelled to retire from hill to hill, sometimes in great disorder." The Americans continued to push the British back toward the center of town until the militiamen in the middle of the American lines were stopped, began giving ground, and then fell back in confusion. They foolishly tended to fire before the British were clearly within range, thus leaving themselves vulnerable to the fierce bayonet charges that Tryon's professionals executed so well. The militia retreated almost two miles before Wolcott was able to rally his men. The two flanks, fearing they might become surrounded, withdrew but did so with neither great disorder

154. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 560-61.

155. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15.

156. Hall, *Records of Norwalk,* p. 178.

nor serious losses. This was largely because of the leadership of Captain Betts, Captain Jeremiah Eells, Captain Phineas Sherman, and Major David Porter. The American force, now regrouped, managed to hold the British and even once again to push them back toward town.[157]

Noise from the fighting at the Rocks frightened many of the refugees from town and sent them fleeing even farther into the interior. "This scene," wrote Samson Means, "so terrified the women & children, that they thought their families no longer safe there & precipitately set off, some on foot & some in a waggon [*sic*] further up the country." Their distress was compounded by the rain that began to fall about midday.[158]

As terrifying as the noise of battle was to the refugees, the smoke they saw rising from their town was even more alarming. Aware of the destruction of Greens Farms, the Norwalk people could imagine their town in ashes.

In fact, the burning had started early that day, when Tryon first started his march from the Calf Pasture. He had set fire to several houses along East Avenue because they had been used to shield rebel snipers. Garth had burned along West Avenue for the same reason.[159]

Several houses burned while the fighting at the Rocks intensified, but the demands of the battle saved Norwalk from other barbarities, the British being too occupied with fighting to create additional havoc in town. As had been the case in New Haven, many of the thefts later blamed on the British were in fact the work of returning Americans. No atrocities were committed by the enemy in Norwalk.[160]

Even the burning that was done was not totally wanton. Tryon issued protections for many buildings. When one of Thomas Belden's female servants requested a protection from Tryon, he not only granted her one but also gave her an escort to guarantee her safe return home. When she returned home, she found that it was already on fire; "but the soldiers put it out," she reported.[161]

In all, eighty houses, two churches, eighty-seven barns, seventeen shops, and four mills burned the day the enemy was in Norwalk. Tryon had guaranteed the safety of many of these buildings. But Fanning's men, who were as eager to use

157. William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, "Clinton Papers"; Samuel H. Parsons to George Washington, July 11, 1779, in Hildreth, *Early Pioneers,* pp. 537-38; George Washington to William Heath, July 14, 1779, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, 1931-1944), XV, 423.

158. Samson Means to Aaron Lopez, July 30, 1779, "Lopez Papers."

159. Cuneo, "British Invasion."

160. *Ibid.;* Hall, *Records of Norwalk,* p. 175; *Connecticut Journal,* September 25, 1779.

161. Hall, *Records of Norwalk,* p. 180.

the torch in Norwalk as they had been in Fairfield, ignored the protections and burned anyway. Part of the extensive damage resulted from the brisk wind that spread the flames from building to building; winds had also fanned the flames at Fairfield. But even if all the destruction had not been done at Tryon's explicit order, still the British left behind losses which the General Assembly later estimated to amount to £26,066:0:1.[162]

As sections of Norwalk went up in flames, Tryon, on Grummond Hill, watched the progress of the fighting at the Rocks. Clearly the rebels were at least holding their own, and clearly the British could win no important advantage there even if they were able to rout the Americans. Tryon concluded that it was time to leave Norwalk and so about 10:00 a.m. issued orders for withdrawal to the Calf Pasture.[163]

The flatboats were already waiting to remove the troops. Marching in a double column, the British departed swiftly, fearing the American defenders at the Rocks might pursue them to the shore. Parsons and Wolcott allowed the British to depart without significant opposition. With the raiders went the Reverend Jeremiah Leaming, the Anglican priest, and an American three-pounder captured at the Rocks. Twenty-four of the returning troops were wounded, and three of the enemy had been killed during the raid. Two soldiers from Tryon's command were listed as missing. By contrast the Continental troops lost five killed and six wounded. The militia failed to report their casualties.[164]

By two on the afternoon of the eleventh, exactly a week after arriving in New Haven Harbor, the fleet was ready to abandon Norwalk. Tryon ordered its return to Huntington Bay to make ready for additional raids. The voyage across the Sound, although short, was a nightmare for many of the exhausted troops. Heavy winds tossed the ships about, and, as Tryon reported to Clinton, "as we put as many as possible into the sloops they were obliged to lay exposed to the rain all night in that crowded situation. . . ."[165]

Back at Huntington Bay, Tryon and Collier started planning an attack on New London. Tryon had already requested additional artillery and ammunition as

162. Hurd, comp., *History of Fairfield County,* pp. 497-98; Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 137; Hoadly *et al.,* eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 425.

163. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615.

164. Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York, 1851), I, 414; *Remembrancer,* pp. 364-65; Hoadley *et al.,* eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 560-61.

165. Log of the "Camilla," PRO, ADM 51, 157, ERD/1615; log of the "Hussar," PRO, ADM 51, 4223, ERD/1615; William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 12, 1779, "Clinton Papers."

well as 1,500 more men. Collier was convinced the raids were useful; they demonstrated, he said, that Washington could not protect Connecticut.[166]

On July 12 Clinton ordered Tryon and Collier to Whitestone Bay to receive additional information on conditions at New London. From the beginning this aspect of the operation had been regarded as the most important and the most dangerous. Clinton wanted to assure its success if at all possible.[167]

By the time the fleet arrived at the western end of Long Island Sound, recent events on the Hudson River assured that there would be no raid on New London, at least not at this time. On the night of July 15-16, General Anthony Wayne, taking advantage of the removal of British forces from New York to provide an army for Tryon, ordered a daring bayonet assault on Stoney Point. The result was the American capture of that post. Clinton feared this was the beginning of further action along the Hudson and so squelched the New London plan. As Collier reported to the Admiralty, "We should have proceeded to attack New London, but that the troops were wanted by Sir Henry Clinton to assist in opposing General Washington, whose motions threatened an attack upon our posts in the North [Hudson] River." Thus, Tryon's activities along the Connecticut coast came to an abrupt and unexpected end.[168]

Success or Failure?

Sir Henry Clinton was unhappy about the raids. The widespread destruction of civilian property shocked him, and he claimed that the ruthlessness was contrary to his orders. "I could not but view with concern the very afflicting damage they had been already productive of to private property," he later wrote, "it never having been my intention to extend the destruction to houses of individuals, much less to those of public worship." The general was sure that such actions only provided ammunition to those Englishmen who doubted the wisdom of trying to beat the Americans into submission.[169]

Clinton demanded a full report from Tryon, one in which the commander of the raiding party would justify his use of the torch. Clinton hoped the report would cool the opposition party's reaction to the attacks.[170]

166. James Pattison to William Tryon, July 10, 1779, in "Letters of Major General James Pattison," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1875,* VIII, 92; Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 134; Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services."

167. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* pp. 135-36.

168. Willcox, *Portrait of a General,* p. 278; Sir George Collier to Philip Stephens, PRO, ADM, 1/1612, 16511.

169. Willcox, *Portrait of a General,* p. 277; Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 130-31; Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 137.

170. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 134.

Tryon asked William Smith, a loyalist friend, for help preparing the report. Smith wrote, using documents that Tryon provided, a draft of the report. The two men together then revised the draft, and Tryon submitted it to Clinton. On July 25 Sir Henry sent it on to Germain.[171]

Tryon remained convinced of the usefulness of his mission. He was sure that Clinton's reservations resulted from his having demonstrated that decisive blows could be struck against the Americans without additional reinforcements. As Smith reported in his diary: "Mr. Tryon can think of no other objection Sir Henry can have to his report, but his dread of its discovering a zeal for the interest of the nation and the conclusion of the war; and that its crossing his general politics by showing tho' he ha'nt troops for what he would wish to do, he had enough upon Tryon's system to end the war."[172]

When Tryon discussed his report with General James Pattison, commandant of the city of New York and a distinguished artillery officer, Pattison agreed that Tryon's raid probably had done some good but asked, "What commander in chief will dare to burn and bring on himself the censures of opposition?" To which Tryon replied, "You'l [*sic*] do nothing then till you find a general regardless of all factions, and attached to his king and country." Tryon had no doubts that his was the proper course.[173]

Sir George Collier was as positive as Tryon about the raids' value. He believed that Connecticut's leaders had become disillusioned with the idea of independence because of the forays. "Their murmurs, both against Washington and the Congress, rose *very high,*" he said; "they execrated them as the *cause* of their misfortunes, from their *imbecility* in not being able to protect, and prevent them."[174]

More important, Lord George Germain approved the raids as did George III. Yet both lamented that the rebels' firing "from their houses upon the troops, rendered it necessary to make use of severities that are ever painful to British soldiers to inflict. . . . "[175]

171. *Ibid.,* p. 138; William Tryon to Sir Henry Clinton, July 20, 1779, in Willcox, ed., *American Rebellion,* pp. 411-15.

172. Smith, *Historical Memoirs,* p. 145.

173. *Ibid.,* pp. 150-51; Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services."

174. Lord George Germain to William Tryon, November 4, 1779, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to New York,* VIII, 778.

175. Isaac Beers to Nathan Beers, July 16, 1779, in Goodrich, "Invasion of New Haven," p. 79; entries of July 12, 1779, "Wheeler Journal"; Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 357, 361; Hoadly *et al.,* eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 358, 442; Stephen St. John to Oliver Wolcott, July 13, 1779, "Wolcott Papers."

If Tryon's purpose in raiding the Connecticut coast had been to terrify the residents, the raids were a great success. In the days and weeks that followed, rumors of the return of the enemy regularly sent the people living on the coast fleeing to the hinterlands for cover. The fear of more raids, wrote Isaac Beers of New Haven, "alarms us so much that we have moved all our effects from the town back into the country, and a great many families have gone out, so that we are almost desolate already. . . . " William Wheeler, a boy diarist from Fairfield, noted that church meetings were held outside town, the people "not daring to meet near the shore for fear of being taken prisoners, so fearful were they then & long after, they could hardly sleep in their beds." Ezra Stiles was preaching to the combined congregations of New Haven's First and Second Societies when a rumor was heard that the British were returning. "Congregation broke up," he noted in his diary, "& spent the day moving furniture and effects." Stiles himself was not above such fears; he boarded two of his daughters at Cheshire and two at Mt. Carmel until he was sure the danger had passed.[176]

In addition to fear, suffering also came to Connecticut with Tryon. The winter that followed the raids was as severe as any since that of 1740. In Norwalk and Fairfield, many endured the cold in makeshift shelters or partially constructed dwellings. These persons had also lost much of their clothing and their furniture; they would long remember that winter.[177]

Money was raised in other areas of Connecticut for the relief of Norwalk, Fairfield, and New Haven. Titus Hosmer of Middletown had suggested the idea to Governor Trumbull in July, and the governor called for contributions in August. Of the small sum that was raised, one-seventh went to New Haven and three-sevenths each to Fairfield and Norwalk.[178]

Other steps were also taken by state officials to ease the suffering. They abated the taxes of New Haven, Fairfield, and Norwalk for several years and granted special licenses to those towns to allow them to purchase badly needed supplies from Rhode Island and Massachusetts.[179]

Despite repeated petitions from the selectmen of the three towns, the General Assembly made no real attempt to compensate the sufferers from the raids until more than a decade after Tryon had visited Connecticut's coast. In 1791, a

176. Entries of the winter of 1779-1780, "Wheeler Journal"; petitions contained in Connecticut Archives, Revolutionary War, Third Series, I, and First Series, XV.

177. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 447, 465; Titus Hosmer to Jonathan Trumbull, July 19, 1779, and Minutes of a Meeting of Governor and Council, August 5, 1779, Trumbull Papers.

178. Hoadly *et al.*, eds., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut,* II, 391, 426-27, 468, 510-11; Hinman, *Historical Collections,* pp. 624-25.

179. Hinman, *Historical Collections,* pp. 624-25.

committee of the legislature investigated the losses suffered by Connecticut towns during the Revolution, and the following year the Assembly granted "to the sufferers, named on the state record, or to their legal representatives if deceased, and to their heirs and assigns forever, 500,000 acres of land, owned by Connecticut, situated west of Pennsylvania. . . . " The land, known as the Firelands, was in the Western Reserve of Ohio.

The legislature ultimately recognized claims from sufferers in seven towns. Danbury and Ridgefield had endured a British raid in 1777 and Groton and New London in 1781. These four towns and Norwalk, Fairfield, and New Haven were allowed £251,606:8:8½ in total losses. New Haven's share was £16,912:16:6; that of Fairfield, £23,893:12:8; and Norwalk's £26,066:0:1. Translated into lands in the Western Reserve, New Haven claimants received about 34,000 acres, while approximately 52,000 acres went to Norwalk and 47,500 to Fairfield. Despite the best intentions of the General Assembly, this grant benefited only a small number of those persons who had actually suffered from the raids. Of those who were still alive, few wanted to abandon their roots in Connecticut to journey to the west; so they sold the land for far less than its value to speculators who, in turn, became the real beneficiaries of the grants.[180]

Ultimately, Tryon's objective was neither to terrify nor to harm Connecticut; his real objective was to win the people of Connecticut away from the cause of independence and back to the arms of George III. To do so he thought he had to frighten them and to make them suffer, but his heavy-handed tactics failed to win the hearts and minds of Connecticut. Rather, these tactics played right into the hands of the rebel leaders.

Tryon's tactics were useful to American propagandists. Samuel Bostwick wrote a whole pamphlet to prove that Tryon was a deranged murderer. Ezra Stiles asserted that the raiders' "barbarity was savage and cruel, if not without a parallel, yet to a degree of the highest and most brutal rigor of war." David Humphreys (native of Derby, Connecticut, aide-de-camp to Washington, and sometime poet) portrayed Tryon as the heir of Attila the Hun:

> Tryon, behold thy sanguine flames aspire,
> Clouds ting'd with dyes intolerably bright;
> Behold, well pleased, the village wrapt in fire,
> Let one wide ruin glut thy ravish'd sight!

180. [Bostwick], *An Address to Major-General Tryon;* Stiles, *The Literary Diary,* II, 356; Humphreys, *David Humphreys,* I, 132-34; Benjamin Lord to Ezra Stiles, March 4, 1780, "Stiles Papers."

E'er fades the grateful scene, indulge thine eye,
See age and sickness, tremulously slow,
Creep from the flames—see babes in torture die,
And mothers swoon in agonies of woe.[181]

That Tryon neither tortured babies nor roasted the elderly or infirm failed to prevent American leaders from charging him with these crimes. Rather the rebels did all they could to picture the general as the essence of all that was evil. Samuel B. Webb, writing from Wethersfield, told of "these wretches, the servants and slaves of George the Third, burning defenceless towns and wageing [*sic*] war against innocent women & children." Webb catalogued some of the raiders' inhumanities. He mentioned that "a child of three years old was taken from the arms of its mother and thrown into the flames, and the mother to stop her shrieks knock'd down with a musket." He also reported that "a man who was taken prisoner being an old countryman, was rolld in a sheet bound fast—the sheet wet with rum and set fire to." Blacks suffered more than most, Webb believed. "Several negro servants who were left to take care of their masters property were burnt alive for attempting to extinguish the flames."[182]

These events that Webb described never happened. But the people of Connecticut believed what Webb, Humphreys, Bostwick, and others said, and later generations likewise took these men at their word. As a result, an extremely distorted picture of the raids has emerged, a picture showing an all-powerful and demented Tryon striding through the coastal towns of Connecticut. Tryon and his men did not act like maniacs, although there was little to admire in the conduct of some of his men, Fanning's regiment and the Jaegers in particular. Neither was Tryon all-powerful. At the Neck Bridge in New Haven, Ward, Sabin, Cook, and Russell foiled his plans and did so in such a way as to save New Haven from the torch; at the Upper Bridge and at Black Rock Fort in Fairfield, Whiting and Jarvis had forced Tryon to forsake his planned raids on Stratfield and Stratford; and at Norwalk, Parsons, Wolcott, Betts, Eells, Sherman, and Porter had encouraged the British to leave town much more hastily than they had planned. Measured strictly in terms of what Tryon had hoped to do while he was in Connecticut, his expedition was hardly a success.

Viewed in a larger sense Tryon's raids failed. Instead of winning support for the Mother Country, his expedition drove Connecticut, large parts of which had in fact been loyal to the king, deep into the rebel camp. Samuel B. Webb wrote Joseph Barrell about the Tryon mission: "I am happy to tell you it has had a very

181. Samuel B. Webb to Joseph Barrell, July 11, 1779, in Worthington C. Ford, ed., *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb* (New York, 1894), II, 179-81.

182. Samuel B. Webb to Jeremiah Wadsworth, July 9, 1779, and Samuel B. Webb to Joseph Barrell, July 11, 1779, both *ibid.*, pp. 178, 179-81.

good effect on the people; the Tory and timid Whig now join in determining to take arms with their virtuous countrymen and sware revenge." He told Jeremiah Wadsworth that Tryon's raids had "roused our countrymen from their lethergy [*sic*], they are preparing to march on the shortest notice wherever called."[183]

Abel Buell of New Haven also noted the salutary effect of the Tryon mission. He described the impact for his cousin, Nathaniel Townsend of Norwich. "In short we have but a trifel left where they have been, except resolution and a full determination to revenge our owne ingerys where ever we meat with them. It is worthy of observation that our Toreys faired as bad or worse than the Whigs, who now say they are willing to fight [misspellings in original]."[184]

So the Tryon mission was ultimately a disaster. Perhaps the raids, from the very beginning, were bound to fail, for they were based upon a false premise: the notion that the Revolution was the work of a small group of immoral malcontents who had misled the American people into thinking that they had some real grievances against the Mother Country. Tryon believed—and had the support of Germain in this belief—that the vigorous use of force would lead the American people to renounce their radical leaders and would reawaken them to the fact that their real interests lay in remaining loyal to the empire. Instead, the raids convinced the people of Connecticut that the idea of the Revolution was valid and that the success of the Revolution was essential if they were to be free from tyranny.

183. Abel Buell to Nathaniel Townsend, July 16, 1779, Lockwood House.

184. Copy of letter from Abel Buell to Nathaniel Townsend, July 16, 1779, in the collection of Lockwood House, Norwalk, Connecticut.

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